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The Maze of the Crimson Cuff

By Captain Robert W. Norton

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CHAPTER I.

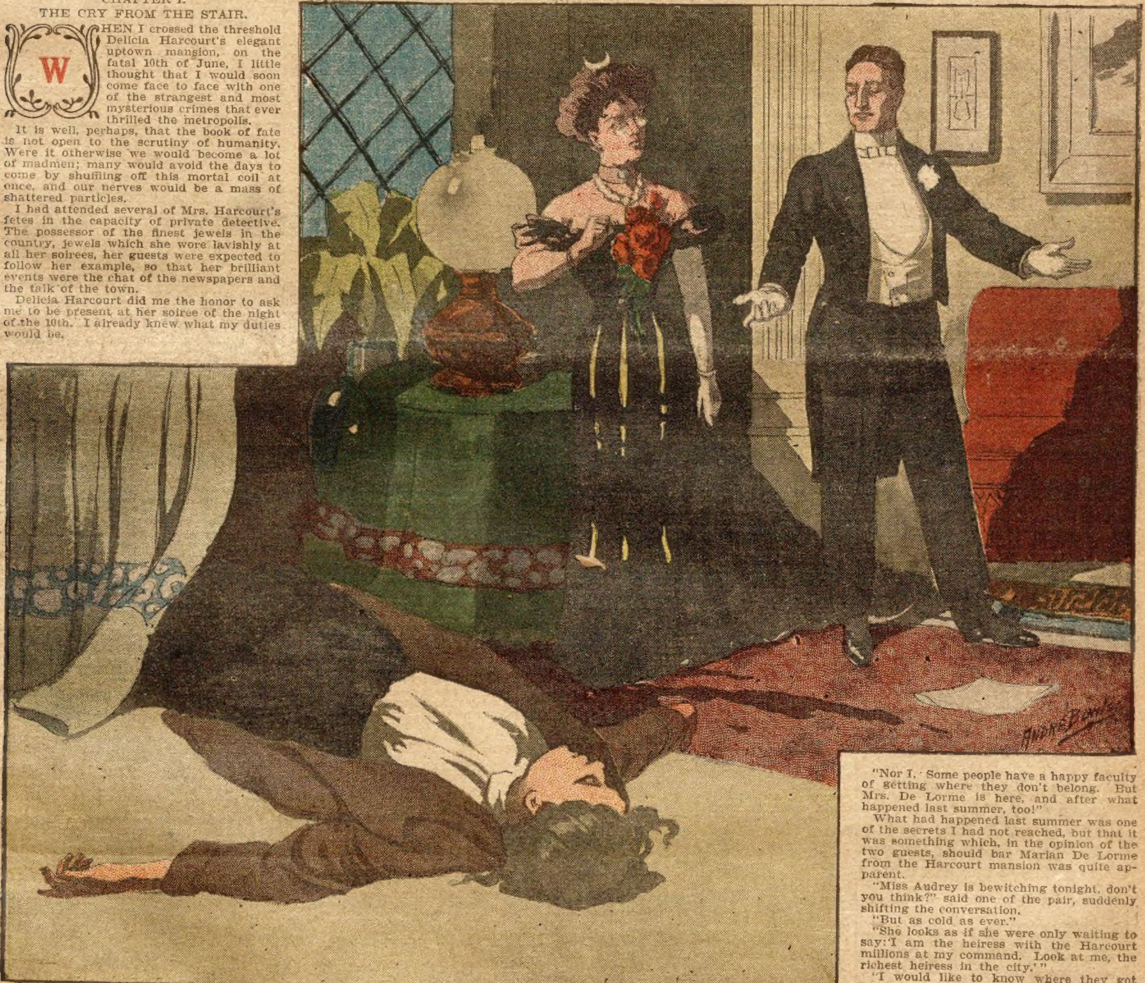
THE CRY FROM THE STAIR.

WHEN I crossed the threshold Delicia Harcourt's elegant uptown mansion, on the fatal 10th of June, I little thought that I would soon come face to face with one of the strangest and most mysterious crimes that ever thrilled the metropolis.

It is well, perhaps, that the book of fate is not open to the scrutiny of humanity. Were it otherwise we would become a lot of madmen; many would avoid the days to come by shuffling off this mortal coil at once, and our nerves would be a mass of shattered particles.

I had attended several of Mrs. Harcourt's fetes in the capacity of private detective. The possessor of the finest jewels in the country, jewels which she wore lavishly at all her soirees, her guests were expected to follow her example, so that her brilliant events were the chat of the newspapers and the talk of the town.

Delicia Harcourt did me the honor to ask me to be present at her soiree of the night of the 10th. I already knew what my duties would be.



My employer was a brilliant woman of fifty, tall, dark eyed, with a soft skin, and she was noted for her cordial, if somewhat haughty, manners. Her husband, a retired cotton king with millions at his command, was in Europe. There were no children, but the couple had adopted a young girl who had assumed the family name—Audrey Harcourt, she was called—and she was in hopes, at the proper time, of possessing the Harcourt millions.

I had met Miss Audrey on several occasions at the Harcourt mansion, where the import of my presence was known and the secret preserved by the family. I must confess that I was not favorably impressed with Audrey Harcourt. She was beautiful, and, to nearly all with whom she came in contact, cold and repellent, and it was said in the society to which she was admitted that she would bring her husband millions, but no love.

In fact she was often called Miss Icicle.

On the night of the 10th I made my appearance at the mansion a trifle later than usual. The elegant rooms of the house were ablaze with light, the major portion of the guests had already arrived and the whirl was on.

I found the mistress of the place on the lower floor passing compliments with her guests. She recognized me with a nod, and I passed to my usual place.

The great display of diamonds dazzled me for a moment. I looked from guest to guest, for I knew them nearly all by sight, and the inner history of some was not entirely beyond my ken.

Among the guests I discovered a little woman whom I had not expected to see there.

Marian De Lorme had but recently returned from Europe, and, while I knew that her wealth was rather large, I did not think that she as yet had obtained an entree into the Harcourt set.

"In the name of Heaven," a voice said almost at my ear, "how does it come that that woman is here?"

Not wishing to be rude, I did not turn full upon the speaker, who was a woman, but a swift glance convinced me that Marian De Lorme was the person under discussion.

"You mystify me," was the reply. "I did not think Mrs. Harcourt had her on her list."

"Nor I. Some people have a happy faculty of getting where they don't belong. But Mrs. De Lorme is here, and after what happened last summer, too!"

What had happened last summer was one of the secrets I had not reached, but that it was something which, in the opinion of the two guests, should bar Marian De Lorme from the Harcourt mansion was quite apparent.

"Miss Audrey is bewitching tonight, don't you think?" said one of the pair, suddenly shifting the conversation.

"But as cold as ever."

"She looks as if she were only waiting to say: 'I am the heiress with the Harcourt millions at my command. Look at me, the richest heiress in the city.'"

"I would like to know where they got her."

"That is their secret, my dear, and they have never seen fit to give it to the world."

"Perhaps it is best that they did not."

"Decidedly, it looks that way to me. There may be good blood in the girl's veins, but I doubt it."

At this moment the conversation was broken by the coming of Mrs. Harcourt herself, who stopped before the gossipers and exchanged some compliments in her usual lively manner.

I made out that I heard nothing.

As Delicia moved off, one of the women said in a stage whisper to her companion:

"You have heard that old rumor?"

"Regarding whom?"

"Delicia."

"Oh, the story about her past?"

"What, they haven't revived that, have they, the meddlers?"

"No, but the old story will not down."

"I never believed it," with emphasis. "One hears so much nowadays, and especially about those who are up in the world. It is infamous, I say."

The two women moved away, and for the first time I got a good look at them. One was the wife of Nelson Jayne, the well-known broker, and the other was Mrs. Tison, a widow of some wealth and literary reputation in certain circles.

A smile came to my lips in spite of myself; that Mrs. Tison should discuss the past of any one was, to say the least, amusing.

Her husband had proved a defaulter and nothing but his death had prevented his appearing at the bar of justice. As for herself, she had been made to disgorge some of the stolen wealth, after which she had taken to literature.

It was not likely that my services would be needed at the Harcourt mansion that night. They had never been needed there, but the safety of her jewels had long been a mania with the mistress of the house, though I had often laughed to myself as I pocketed the easily earned fee.

With the two gossips out of my sight, I turned my attention to Mrs. De Lorme.

This woman had, on more than one occasion, claimed my attention, why, I hardly knew. She was not a criminal, far from it, but there was something mysterious about her that I often found myself regarding her as one regards the chess board when the game has reached a critical stage.

Suddenly, even while I watched her, Mrs. De Lorme vanished. I saw her flit across the sumptuous room and disappear in the crowd, as I then thought.

"Some time I hope to know more about you," I thought, as I turned my eyes from the place where she had vanished. "You may be a little mystery, the solving of which may be a pleasure when I have nothing pressing on my hands, but not tonight. I have duties here that will not let me take care of such an atom of humanity as yourself, Mrs. De Lorme."

With this I moved away.

At this juncture there came through the room the soft strains of the concealed harpers.

The guests for a moment ceased their talk and Mrs. Harcourt, with a wave of her fan, indicated her desire to have all listen, as if the music was out of the ordinary. It should have been after what she had paid for it.

While all seemed to be entranced with the exquisite melody, I caught another glimpse of Mrs. De Lorme. She leaned slightly against the polished newel of the mahogany stair, and with half-closed eyes seemed to have given herself over to the strains of the ravishing Italian air.

The hour now was almost eleven.

In a short time the guests of Mrs. Harcourt would sit at the brilliant table and a feast, sumptuous in the extreme, would follow and keep up till past midnight.

Almost mechanically I moved toward the stair. The slight acquaintance—it was very slight indeed—which I enjoyed with Marian De Lorme would give me a chance to address her, and with the intention of doing so I went forward.

I was not to carry out my design, for I was to be balked by one of the most startling interruptions I had ever experienced.

The last strains of the music had died away leaving a dead silence throughout the parlor.

Mrs. Harcourt was about to signal that the conversation, broken by the harpers, could be resumed, when there appeared on the broad stair, half way up, the blanched and tottering figure of one of the servants.

The tall maid looked as if she had just come in contact with the dead, as indeed she had. She clutched the heavy railing of the flight with her hands, and with a wild, searching look for Mrs. Harcourt, her lips parted in one terrorizing cry.

"Murder! murder! murder!"

Mrs. De Lorme glanced up at the maid, turned white as death, and every one in the room seemed paralyzed with horror.

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CHAPTER II.

THE MYSTERY OF THE PLUSH ROOM.

One thing I distinctly recall, even now after the lapse of time, and that is that, despite the horror that followed the cry of the tall maid, I looked at Marian De Lorme.

Why, I cannot tell. Why had she sought the foot of the stair just before the terrible announcement of the crime? Had she anticipated such a terrible event? If not, why had she come to that spot where she would first hear the cry of the girl, and from whence she could see the effect it produced on Mrs. Harcourt?

But Marian De Lorme had moved away, yet her face was visible and strangely calm.

The next moment there came another cry from the steps.

"Don't you hear me? I say it is murder—murder in the plush room, madam!" and the girl looked at the hostess of the evening.

Then, as if she had nothing left to do, the maid sank in a fainting heap on the Brusseled staircase, her white hand falling slowly from its grip on the balustrade.

No one moved. Even myself, used to the wild and mysterious in crime, appeared to have lost the powers of reasoning and volition. I was recalled from my trance, if I may call it so, by the voice of Delicia.

"There was no one in the plush room!" said she. "The girl is mad! The room was not tenanted! The whole thing is impossible!"

Then, a moment later she continued:

"Mr. Nicol will lead the way. Never mind the girl, Mr. Nicol. Doctor Burton will take care of her."

It is needless to say that I went up the stairs two steps at a time.

I knew the location of the so-called "plush room," for Mrs. Harcourt had showed it to me on a former occasion, therefore it was the easiest thing in the house to find.

I passed the form of the girl Therese, on the steps and heard some footsteps behind me, but not looking back, I gained the upper landing and bolted for the plush room.

As I opened the door—it was tightly closed—a scene of horror met my gaze.

On the floor, face downward, lay the form of a woman. A large chair was overturned, there were torn curtains, and the carpet, heavy though it was, was considerably ruffled.

Everything indicated a terrible struggle for life. There was blood on the woman's dress, blood on her shapely hands, blood on the arms of the chair—in fact, the crimson stain was everywhere visible. But not a sign of the murderer.

My first act was to lift the figure on the floor and to look into the face held up to my horrified gaze.

It was the face of a woman of perhaps fifty, well-shaped and intelligent, but the wild stare that still clung to the sightless orbs retold the terror that must have accompanied the desperate struggle for life.

She was totally unknown to me.

As I righted the chair and placed the dead one in it in a reclining position, I heard a gasp behind me, and turning, stood face to face with Delicia Harcourt.

She stood just within the room, and her look was not at the woman in the Morris chair, but at me.

"She is dead!" said I.

Then she came forward and breathlessly looked down at the victim of crime.

As yet they were alone, but I knew the room would swarm with a lot of terrified guests, so I addressed myself to Mrs. Harcourt.

"Therese was right," said I. "There has been murder here. You said the chamber was not tenanted?"

"I did, and I thought so. Who is this poor creature?"

I shook my head.

"Her identity as yet is a mystery. You do not know her, Mrs. Harcourt?"

"I never saw her. In the name of Heaven, how came she to my house?"

"If the answer depends on her, it will never be known."

"It is terrible. But have you looked carefully? May not her identity be known by a search of—of the body?"

She seemed to tremble as she pronounced the last word.

"Can you keep the crowd at bay a few moments?" I said.

"But, Doctor Burton?"

"Oh, yes. Admit him, but he can do nothing for this creature."

She went to the door and opened it. The gasping crowd was already there.

"Doctor Burton?" I heard her say. "The rest of you will please remain outside the room. There is murder in my house."

The following moment Burton came in, and with a look at the occupant of the chair, turned his attention to me.

"It is too late, Mr. Nicol. I fancy you have a real mystery on your hands now."

I nodded and invited the doctor forward. Mrs. Harcourt leaned against the onyx mantel and surveyed the scene before her. She was calm now and I thought I detected in her eyes a gleam of satisfaction, if not triumph.

"I never saw a case just like this," said Burton, taking his eyes off the dead and turning them upon me.

"Why, doctor?" queried Mrs. Harcourt.

"The fiendishness of this killing. See, Nicol, this woman has been stabbed in half a dozen different places, each one of which might have caused death. And you can see how she struggled for life against the assassin. He must have fought her all over the room before she finally dropped at his feet."

"The room itself indicates a terrific fight for life," said I.

"She had strength, but not enough to balk the fiend. Have you looked for any clews yet, Mr. Nicol?"

"Not yet."

During this time Delicia Harcourt had not moved from the mantel, but now she came forward, and fixing her gaze upon Doctor Burton, said:

"How is Therese?"

"Oh, she'll be all right in a little while."

"Where is the girl?"

"They've carried her to her own room, I believe."

"What has she said about her discovery?"

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"Nothing, as yet. She is hardly in the proper state to give a lucid account of what she knows."

"I'll go down and look after the poor girl myself," and we saw Mrs. Harcourt leave the room.

I heard her tell those who lingered on the landing, and the stair as well, to descend, that all would be explained soon, and then amid the shuffling of feet, I lost the sound of her voice.

There was nothing about the woman to give one the least clew to her identity.

Her handkerchief was without a monogram, and the one ring she wore was a plain gold one without the first identifying mark.

After a careful search of the body I turned to the room itself.

One of the windows looked out upon a veranda, over the top of which a heavy vine lay, and I noticed that it trailed to the ground below. The window was unfastened, and when I raised the sash and looked out, I saw nothing that seemed to give me the slightest clew.

The plush room could be entered by this window or by a hallway leading from another part of the house, as well as by the main stair, which terminated in the parlor where Mrs. Harcourt held her fetes. In short, the trail of the murderer seemed wrapped in the deepest mystery.

"Nothing can be done here," said I, with a glance at Burton. "We must look elsewhere for a solution of this puzzle in red. If Mrs. Harcourt did not know of the presence of this woman in the house, how, and why came she here? And how did the assassin know where to find her?"

"You put questions which belong only to your profession," was the reply.

"If the maid came to the scene in time, she may know something."

"Yes."

"Mrs. Harcourt evidently does not."

"I can trust Mrs. Harcourt. But this woman got into the house somehow, and the fiend knew where to find her. His design was murder, not robbery."

"Mrs. Harcourt does not keep her jewels in this room," said I.

"Then it was murder, pure and simple."

"It would seem so. First we must establish the identity of this person and then——"

"Start the trail from that point, eh, Mr. Nicol?"

I nodded, and Doctor Burton moved toward the door, for the voice of Mrs. Harcourt was calling from below.

With another glance around the room, I went out with him, closing the door of the plush chamber behind me.

CHAPTER III.

MARIAN DE LORME DISAPPEARS.

A good many of the guests had taken their departure when I reached the floor below. Others were about to go, and several lingered in hopes of having their morbid curiosity satisfied by admittance to the chamber of horror.

I singled out the butler and gave him my orders.

"Admit no one to the plush chamber," said I.

"Does madam command it?"

"Whether she does or not, I do," and I stationed the fellow at the foot of the staircase.

Doctor Burton had followed Mrs. Harcourt to another part of the house, and I turned as the voice of Miss Audrey fell upon my ears.

"Is it true?" the young girl asked, as I bowed slightly. "Was the plush chamber tenanted?"

"Yes, miss."

"By whom?"

"I do not know. We must reach that by and by."

"Horrible! Is the woman upstairs really dead?"

"As dead as she will ever be. She has been murdered."

The lips of Audrey Harcourt turned white.

"I told mamma——"

She stopped and shut her lips hard, looking away for a moment.

"I told mamma that some one would attempt to steal the jewels sometime."

"But they were not kept in the plush room, miss."

"I know, but how would the thief know they were not?"

I looked at the girl, but did not say what, at that moment, rose to my lips.

"The woman upstairs must have been followed to the room," said I. "The assassin knew where to find her," and then I thought of the maid, Therese.

"Where is the maid's room?" I asked.

Audrey gave the information, and I started across the room, when a thought of Marian De Lorme flashed through my head.

"One moment," I said, for the young girl had turned away. "Has Mrs. De Lorme gone?"

"Mrs. De Lorme?" echoed Audrey. "I do not know such a woman, Mr. Nicol."

"She was one of your mother's guests tonight."

"I do not know all of mamma's guests. She has an exclusive list, and I am not always consulted."

I looked through the now meager crowd that remained, but could see nothing of the woman I sought. Marian De Lorme was not among them.

"What sort of looking woman is this Mrs. De Lorme?" queried Audrey, as if willing to help me.

In two words I described the woman, and the girl slowly shook her head.

"I have a slight recollection of having seen such a person in the room tonight, but as to who she was, I cannot say."

With this I left the room and made my way to the sleeping apartments of the servants.

Before I opened the door I heard a confused murmur of voices and the next moment I stood face to face with the occupants of the little chamber.

Therese was sitting in a chair with a very white face, and the moment she saw me, she shot a quick glance at Mrs. Harcourt.

"Oh, it is you, Mr. Nicol?" said the rich woman. "This poor child, I fear can throw but little light upon this dark subject. She absolutely knows nothing."

"What did she see? She was the first to find the woman upstairs," I replied.

"Evidently so. You can question her if her nerves are strong enough to stand the strain."

"She can answer you, Mr. Nicol," put in Burton. "She has come out of the tangle with pretty good nerves."

Therese looked at me with a mute appeal to be easy with her, but I did not intend to obey her injunction farther than it suited my fancy.

"What did you find when you went to the plush chamber?" I asked.

"The woman, dead on the floor and the room all torn up."

"What made you go to the room, miss?"

"I thought I heard a noise there."

"And when she opened the door it was all over," broke in Mrs. Harcourt.

I glanced at the woman who had interrupted, but did not speak to her.

"Perhaps it would be well to let the maid tell her own story," politely said Doctor Burton.

"I will," said Mrs. Harcourt. "I did not mean anything by my remark, Mr. Nicol."

"How long after you heard the noise that you went to the room?" I continued, turning again to the girl in the chair.

"I cannot tell you, but it was not long afterward."

"You heard no voices there?"

"I cannot recall any."

"Did you look at the woman whom you found on the floor?"

"Heavens, no! I would not have touched her for the world!" and the maid shuddered.

"Have you any idea when and by what means the murdered woman entered the house?"

Therese shook her head emphatically.

"She would have been seen, seems to me, by some of us girls had she come in fairly," she added.

"You heard no one come in and no one leave the house from the upper floor?"

"No one, sir."

I turned away somewhat disappointed.

Therese wiped her forehead with her hand and I caught sight of a little darkish stain on her wrist.

"Did Miss Therese cut herself on the stair?" I asked, looking at Doctor Burton.

"I nearly fell to the floor when I saw the woman in the plush room," put in the girl quickly. "I must have got this blood on my hand when I caught hold of the chair there for support."

"Quite natural," said Mrs. Harcourt.

"Yes," I responded.

We left the maid alone in the room, Doctor Burton saying that she needed no further attention, and filed out, Mrs. Harcourt shutting the door carefully behind us.

"What did you find in the room?" she asked, looking at me.

"Nothing, madam."

"What does it all mean?"

"The future may determine that. We have no clew so far."

"But you will not give up the search, Mr. Nicol?"

"I would be remiss in duty if I did so."

"Of course, I deprecate the unpleasant notoriety this will give me and my house. A woman murdered in my house! I cannot think of it. The whole thing seems a dreadful nightmare. If poor Therese had only gone to the plush chamber a little sooner!"

We found that Miss Audrey was the only occupant of the parlor, which of late had swarmed with merry life.

The fair girl stood in the middle of the room, her white face rendered ghastly by the garish light of the chandelier that hung from the ceiling.

She mutely looked at her adopted mother, then opened her lips to speak, but strangely maintained silence.

"I can do nothing more here," I heard Burton say. "The body will have to be taken in charge by the authorities, and my friend Nicol, here, will be expected to unravel this red skein."

"And I am satisfied that Mr. Nicol will do his best. I shall give him carte blanche."

Doctor Burton took his departure, leaving me with the Harcourts in the house of mystery.

"You have locked the door of the plush room until the coming of the authorities?" said Mrs. Harcourt, turning to me.

"There was no key, but the room at your command is safe from intrusion."

"The butler will see to that."

"No, one has entered the room," came the voice of Jonas, the butler, from the top of the staircase.

Mrs. Harcourt went over to where Audrey stood, and leaving the couple alone, I passed out of the house by a small door and went to the veranda that ran beneath the window of the room of mystery and death.

CHAPTER IV.

MR. USUAL SINGER MAKES A CALL.

The night was not very conducive to the picking up of a trail as tangled as the one to which I had been brought by the startling culmination of Mrs. Harcourt's fete. There was a crescent in the summer sky, but it was hidden by a mass of clouds that had drifted up from the bay, and then I had the bulk of the mansion between me and the luminary.

This, however, did not deter me, and I reached the edge of the veranda to discover that the vines were heavy and rather old. Above me were the dark windows of the ill-fated chamber, two of which looked out upon the porch.

Striking a noiseless lucifer I held it close to the foot of the vines and moved it up and down in my quest after a clew that would solve the puzzle of the plush chamber.

All at once I stopped and held the light at a certain spot. The contour of the vines was broken, some of the lesser branches looked as if they had been injured by the descent of a heavy body. I held the match close and scrutinized them closely.

If the murderer had come down the vines, why could I not go up?

In another moment I found myself clambering toward the windows, hand over hand, but with all the care I could assume, for fear of displacing a branch that might give me something tangible to work on.

All at once my hand came in contact with something which the slightest touch told me was not the vine. I steadied myself and seized the object I had found.

Looking at it as well as I could, I went no further upward, but dropped to the ground and went to where a glint of light came from one of the windows of the mansion.

At first glance I saw what I held in my hand. It was not the weapon which had let out the life of the unknown, but it was a cuff, evidently torn from some hand by violence.

It had parted at the button, as if its wearer had caught it among the vines and, in jerking loose, had lost the cuff. The button still adhered to one fragment of the cuff, which was streaked with crimson, as if the murderer—for I doubted not it belonged to him—had dyed it in the gore of his victim.

This startling find and possible clew I put away in a safe place and again clambered up the network of vines.

In a minute I found myself on the roof of the veranda, which was slightly damp. The window of the plush chamber was before me, and I bent eagerly forward and examined the sill in the light of another match.

There were slight abrasions on the wood, which was quite hard, as though made by a boot heel, but they afforded me little satisfaction, though they seemed to confirm that the owner of the crimson cuff had made them.

I did not try to enter the room, still tenanted by the dead woman, but, having found all I cared to find at the time, I dropped to the ground, and, passing to the street through the carriage drive, left the occupants of Harcourt house to themselves.

Not again did I look at the cuff till I reached my room, where I turned on the light, and drew it from my pocket.

As I did so, the button, loosely fastened since the tearing of the cuff, came out and dropped upon the table. It was a plain gold button, such as those not over fond of jewelry would wear. It was devoid of ornament or initials and matched well the plainness of the cuff itself, which, but for the stains of red, would have looked pretty on the person of a lady.

One thing I noticed while observing the cuff, and that was that it had encircled a delicate wrist, that it had not been worn long, having been put on clean and had not been soiled before the night of the crime.

Thrusting the cuff into an inner pocket I went out and down to the coroner's office. I knew that the news of the mysterious murder at Mrs. Harcourt's had preceded me, as indeed it had.

The body had been removed and now occupied a space in the coroner's office, and some half-dozen reporters were eagerly writing up the tragedy with all the fanciful embellishments they were capable of using.

I did not wish, as yet, to be drawn into the muddle, so, after a glance at the interior of the coroner's office, I betook myself off and dodged into the first car that came along.

Already the people had got hold of the murder. As I dropped into the first available corner, a man at my right gave me a stare and said raucously:

"That's a frightful thing, eh, neighbor?"

"What?" queried the look I gave him.

"Why, that crime at Madam Harcourt's. A strange woman was killed in her house tonight and it broke up the function."

"I should think it would," piped a little woman with a weazened face, across the aisle. "And because it's some poor woman who has been killed I'll bet my head that they never try to find the murderer. Madam Harcourt can buy off the whole set o' police——"

"Madam," put in the man at my elbow, "don't you admit there's some honest men on the force?"

"Precious few, I tell you. Money is king nowadays, and it shuts many a mouth."

"But the authorities can, and no doubt will, take this affair out of Mrs. Harcourt's hands."

"Watch 'em!" cried the little woman, warming up. "They know the goose that lays the golden egg. Ho, there, conductor! I want off at Penny street. You've passed it now."

The woman sprang up, almost jabbing her antagonist in the eye with her fifty-cent umbrella, and bolted for the door amid the laughter of the other passengers.

During the rest of the ride the man beside me aired his opinions of crime and mysteries in general, and I must confess that he had some original ideas and some which he had borrowed from Poe and Gaboriau.

It was with a sense of relief that I alighted at my corner, and once more found myself in the little room, which had been my quarters for five years.

The next day and the next passed without the slightest light upon the maze of the crimson cuff.

The body of the unfortunate victim of the tragedy had been removed to the Morgue for identification, and the newspapers had given whole columns to the mystery, probably because of the social prominence of Mrs. Delicia Harcourt.

Of the thousands who viewed the body, not one had lodged with the authorities a clew to the woman's identity. The mystery only deepened with the days, and I felt that no one but the owner of the red cuff could untangle the knot unless——

When I came to this point, which I often did in my cogitations, the name of a little woman came into my mind—Marian De Lorme!

I had already discovered that she was not in the city, having gone away the morning after the fatal fete, and no one knew where she had gone.

Did Mrs. De Lorme really know?

Hard upon the tragedy came the public announcement of Audrey Harcourt's engagement to Mr. Noel Van Kirk, a man well-known in society circles and a young man of much wealth and prominence.

It was given out that, but for the absence Mr. Harcourt in Europe, the engagement would have been announced before, and Delicia had confided to a reporter that, but for the crime of the plush chamber, she would have made it that fatal night.

I kept aloof from the Harcourt mansion, though it was inhabited by one person whom I wanted to interview alone, and this was none other than Therese, the tall maid.

It was the fifth night after the crime when I heard a nervous rap on my door.

Expecting no one, though I was liable to have some friend drop in to discuss the latest phase of wrong-doing, I looked up and bade the would-be visitor enter.

The last person whom I expected entered the room.

It was the man who had sat beside me on the street car and crossed swords of opinion with the woman with the umbrella. I had not seen him since the episode.

He stopped short at sight of me, and his bushy little eyebrows twitched with surprise.

"Well, of all things!" he exclaimed. "I did not think you were Mr. Harris Nicol the night we came down on the car. Don't you remember how nearly that hussy came to jabbing out my eye?"

I told him that I vividly recalled the incident.

"My name is Usual Singer," he went on volubly. "I thought I would drop in a moment. Well, have they found out yet who killed Medora Jewett, in the plush room at Mrs. Harcourt's?"

I went forward, despite my usual coolness.

"Medora Jewett? Was that her name?"

"Yes, I knew her well. Went to the Morgue today and got a squint at the body and knew it on sight. Funny, ain't it, that she should be killed in Delicia Harcourt's palace of riches? Who do you think did the deed?" and Mr. Usual Singer drummed on the floor with his feet.

Here, I thought, was the very person I was looking for.

This powerful story of treachery and detective work will be continued in the next week's Ledger. Do not miss reading it. A lot of great and timely stories will appear in the Ledger during this year. Send in your subscription and you will find yourself repaid many times over. You will be lonesome without the Ledger, so do not let your subscription expire.

AFRAID TO EAT

Girl Starving on Ill-Selected Food.

"Several years ago I was actually starving," writes a Me. girl, "yet dared not eat for fear of the consequences.

"I had suffered from indigestion from overwork, irregular meals and improper food, until at last my stomach became so weak I could eat scarcely any food without great distress.

"Many kinds of food were tried, all with the same discouraging effects. I steadily lost health and strength until I was but a wreck of my former self.

"Having heard of Grape-Nuts and its great merits, I purchased a package, but with little hope that it would help me—I was so discouraged.

"I found it not only appetizing but that I could eat it as I liked and that it satisfied the craving for food without causing distress, and if I may use the expresion, 'it filled the bill.'

"For months Grape-Nuts was my principal article of diet. I felt from the very first that I had found the right way to health and happiness, and my anticipations were fully realized.

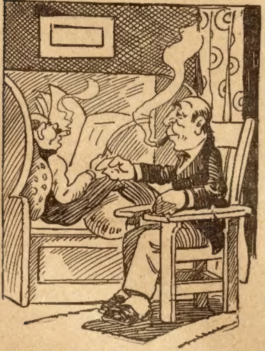
"With its continued use I regained my usual health and strength. Today I am well and can eat anything I like, yet Grape-Nuts food forms a part of my bill of fare."

"There's a Reason."

Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich. Read "The Road to Wellville," in pkgs.

Ever read the above letter? A new one appears from time to time. They are genuine, true, and full of human interest.

Silenced.



Smith—I see by the papers that Oldbatch at last is numbered among the silent.

Jones—Is he really dead?

Smith—No; he was married yesterday.

Good News for the Deaf.

A celebrated New York Aurist has been selected to demonstrate to deaf people that deafness is a disease and can be cured rapidly and easily in your own home. He proposes to prove this fact by sending to any person having trouble with their ears a trial treatment of this new method absolutely free. We advise all people who have trouble with their ears to immediately address Dr. Edward Gardner, suite 313, No. 40 West Thirty-third street, New York City, and we wish to assure them that they will receive by return mail, absolutely free, a "Trial Treatment."

The Only Way for Him.

A bachelor member of the Senate, who recently addressed a young woman and had his offer rejected, went to Senator Hopkins of Illinois for sympathy and advice. Senator Hopkins is known to have a very sympathetic nature, and he listened patiently to the bachelor Senator's tale of woe. When the whole harrowing narrative was finished Mr. Hopkins looked at his love sick friend critically. The latter would not be classed as a handsome man; as a matter of fact, he is probably one of the homeliest men in the Senate.

"Guess I'll tell you a story," said the junior Illinois Senator with a smile. "You have heard of Uncle Dick Oglesby, of course? Well, he was a very famous man in his day, and one of the biggest Governors my State has ever had. One day Uncle Dick, as every one affectionately called him, visited the State penitentiary at Joliet to hear complaints of prisoners, inspect the premises, etc. The Governor stopped before a cell containing an unusually ugly man.

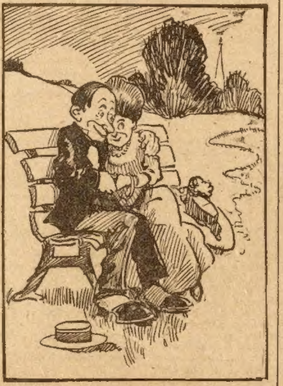
"'My man,' said Gov. Oglesby, pleasantly, 'how did you get here?'

"'For abducting a girl,' growled the man.

"Gov. Oglesby looked him over critically and then said:

"'Well, I'll pardon you as soon as I get back to Springfield. You could not get a girl in any other way!'"

Squeezed Both.



Mr. Titewad—Darling, I love you as I love my riches.

Miss Wise—Oh, that's the reason you squeeze me so tightly, then.

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THE STOLEN FORT;

Or, ONE AGAINST MANY

By Colonel William H. Manning

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CHAPTER XI.

WHO IS THE TRAITOR?

BRUCE of Athabasca remained motionless and looked at the two other walkers in the glade. He was seen in return, and they were so near that he could have touched them with the barrel of his gun. They did not pause. Continuing their way calmly, they began to recede. Then one of the twain turned partially and spoke a few cautious words.

"Monsieur, if you want your prey, go and take them!"

Another moment and the two had disappeared in the gloom of the high trees and Bruce was alone.

He remained staring at the spot where he had last seen them. Surprise held him mute and motionless. He believed he had recognized one of the pair at first sight. Incredible as it seemed, that person was like Simeon of Fort Ever-Beware. The other—the one who had spoken—he failed to read further. The slight figure, the almost boyish clothes and manner, the quick movements were as unfamiliar as was the little he had seen of the face in the dim light.

But the voice!

In that he had found what he believed was a familiarity, and he was buffeting his memory to place the speaker. Where had he seen this youth of the wild-lands?

And the words? What significance lay back of them? Soft as the tone had been, something like derision tinged it through and through. It was, he thought, as if "You are foiled!" had been added.

A gentle whistle sounded. Bruce aroused. He had heard the call of Jacques Larade. He moved promptly, pressed forward and reached the edge of the woods. Stretched out in a line, all of the man-hunters waited there for the repetition of the whistle; then it would be a general rush for the fort.

The whistle did not come. Something else did.

Directly in front of them there was a sudden bright flash as if of gunpowder, and all in their vicinity was clearly lighted. Nor did the flame die out. It had leaped up in a pile of dry brush. This it seized upon and began to burn greedily.

Then a voice rose loudly from the palisade of the fort.

"Jacques Larade!" was the cry, "if you want trouble and mischief-making here, come and get your fill. You will be well received. All the guns of this post are shotted, and all my men at their stations. At a word from me the guns will be fired, and whoever gets in the way will be mowed down like grain. Do you come?"

Grio Turcotte recognized the voice of Gilday, chief trader at the post. So did Jacques Larade, but he did not answer. It dawned upon him that the surprise was no surprise, and that only a madman would order a charge on the fort with its guns manned and ready.

"As for that canoe," proceeded Gilday, "it is mine, and mine only. It was stolen by an Indian, and it is nothing to me that you of the Northwesters were foolish enough to buy it from the thief. I have taken it again into my possession. It is inside this fort, close to the west palisade, and only some ten feet from the main gate. It is light, and can be carried by one of your men—if you get it. Do you want to come for it?"

A derisive laugh rose from the fort. Larade was silent and full of impotent fury. The brush burned brightly near his party; the guns frowned blackly from the fort. To try to cross the intervening space would be to go to death. The guns would sweep the assailants away pitilessly and surely.

"There has been treachery!" said Larade huskily. "Word of our intention has been taken to Gilday!"

Bruce had walked close to the leader's side. He heard the assertion, and believed that he could tell how the warning had come to the post. He recalled that significant whisper: "If you want your prey, go and take them!" Wit-lacking Simeon and another! But who?

Jacques Larade played a nervous tune on his gun-barrel and his breathing was audible. Utter failure had met his project. To attack was madness. Rage and chagrin burned in his breast as hotly as the brush before his face.

He was no man of words, and he made a commendable decision then. Parley and threats were folly. Sullenly he turned away from Fort Auscade.

"Back to our holes!" he ordered bitterly.

They went, gliding through the woods like phantoms of guilt. The bushrangers knew their leader and were too wise to speak until he set the example; an irritating word then might have cost a life. The boats were reached and the return began. For a mile there was the same profound silence, and then Larade found his tongue.

"This will go over all Rupert's-Land!" he said thickly. "Foe and friend will laugh at us. Sacre bleu! they had best not laugh to my face—but I babble! There has been treachery. Some one carried warning to them. Who was it?"

It was a point discussed at length. Bruce and Grio saw with great relief that, thus far, Larade's suspicions did not point their way. He considered whether anybody from his own section could have betrayed him, and said nothing about Fort Ever-Beware.

Sooner than was to be expected he abandoned the fruitless subject. He fell into thought, and ended by suddenly looking at Bruce.

"Bellefauile," he said, "where did you get your early education in the fur-trade?"

The chief trader knew the early history of Louis Bellefauile well enough to answer in due form.

"At Wrendale House, monsieur."

"Oh! Maybe it was there. Yes, perhaps. You see, there is something familiar about you; it is as if I had known you slightly sometime."

Bruce thought of the ride in the barrens and wondered how long it would take Jacques to arrive at the truth.

"I used to go to Wrendale in those days," added the Frenchman. "Ay, it may have been there."

He spoke like one not satisfied with his own theory, but speedily dismissed the subject.

The voyageurs rowed on until their place of original embarkation was reached. Here Larade took leave of Bruce's party, and the trader led his own detachment back to Fort Ever-Beware. He and Grio were soon closeted in Bruce's private room, and there the trader told the tale of the two persons in the glade.

"Simeon?—Simeon?" repeated Grio. "How could that simple-minded fellow have known enough to take warning to Gilday?—and how did he know of the expedition?"

"I now remember that he was near when Roger Rochen brought the note from Larade, and that he must have heard what Rochon said."

"But he was born and bred among the Northwesters, and must have imbibed sympathy for their cause with the milk of his infancy."

"True."

"What would he know, anyhow, about the need of warning?"

"I only know that I saw him—I think—in the glade. He and another."

"And that other? Who was it?"

"A boy, slight, beardless, trim, soft-voiced——"

"Fit description for a woman."

"A woman!" echoed Bruce quickly.

"I said that the description was suitable for a woman."

"And yet— yet—a woman! Grio, the figure, the poise of the head, the dainty waist, the voice! You have put a strange idea into my head."

"What is the name of the idea—and the woman?"

"I don't know. I don't mean that my imagination is vivid enough to fix the identity of the woman. I only assert that the companion of Simeon seemed more woman than man, despite the masculine clothes."

"As to Simeon, let us look to him. His room is easily entered from the outside."

They went. Simeon was found in bed, and seemingly fast asleep. Dry, clean moccasins lay on a chair, and nowhere did they find mud on his garments or on the floor. If Simeon had been sharp enough to carry word to Gilday he had also been sharp enough to take no betraying signs back to his quarters.

For the time the matter ended there.

The following morning Bruce met Madame Anne and Valerie at the mess-table, as usual. The two ladies were making themselves felt. The widow of Benoit Quivillion was as dominating as before. She was full of plans as to the domestic economy of the post, and in speaking of these she never took the chief trader into consideration. Changes were planned and he was not consulted. Madame Anne permeated everything domestic, and zealously tried to plan all other things. It was even said that she was the only person living of whom Corbert Grand was afraid.

Valerie was of a different fashion. Madame Anne had adopted the girl, but had never been able to change her nature. Valerie was gentleness and vivacity combined; she was never forward with her ideas, but nevertheless, never at loss to express them well when necessary. Other individuals bowed to Madame Anne in fear; they bowed to Valerie in homage.

Time had enabled her to cast off all the ill effects of the adventure on the river, the day when she and Madame Anne returned. Of late she had rallied from gloom very perceptibly. She talked more, laughed more, and had a sunny air that charmed all who met her.

At first she had seemed to shrink from Bruce; now she met him with well-directed frankness. He admired her, but hoped that her fresh attentions to him did not indicate that she was dwelling unduly on the matrimonial plans laid for their hearts. As he did not covet her hand in marriage, he felt that he would rather dwell in the tents of the wicked than in the heart of Valerie.

That morning he looked more closly than usual at her. He remembered the youth seen in the glade. It seemed ridiculous to suspect that she, a daughter of the Northwesters, had taken warning to Gilday, yet, if there had been a woman in the garments of the boy, he had to suspect somebody.

If Valerie was guilty, hers was an innocent exterior. She was apparently as open and free from secrets as she was distributive of sunshine. She had a good word for Bruce and Grio Turcotte, and for Roger Ingram and John Clayes, the clerks; yes, even for Prosper Marsoin.

The latter having been taken into the fort as one of the "gentleman" employees, had, of course, also been taken to the mess-table. The only one who audibly objected to this was Madame Anne. She could not oppose the customs of the service, but she did have a poor opinion of Prosper Marsoin, and she said so plainly to Bruce.

But Prosper ate as usual, and was a meek and humble person at the board. He rarely spoke on these occasions, and seemed to find his chief pleasure in gazing at the center of his plate. Perhaps he found there the intellectual inspiration gained by others in exchange of ideas. Perhaps, too, the fact that he was generally scorned or barely tolerated by the greater part of his associates had something to do with it.

When chairs were vacated this morning, Madame Anne addressed herself to Bruce.

"Monsieur Bellefauile," she said, "can you spare me a few minutes conversation?"

The chief trader scented trouble, but politely replied that he could. Accordingly, he followed after her and they were soon seated as privately as could be desired.

"Now, monsieur," the lady continued, "if you will pardon my abruptness, I would like to ask a question. How about your marriage to our Valerie?"

CHAPTER XII.

THE MARKED FIRE-BAG.

Madame Anne presented the question with a business air. If she was not sharp and aggressive, neither was she gentle and apologetic. Perhaps she thought that, as the mother by adoption of a winsome maiden, she did not herself need alluring ways.

Bruce of Athabasca heard the words with sudden trepidation.

"I am not sure," he replied, "that I understand you."

"I mean," Madame Anne explained, "when does the marriage take place?"

"As far as I know no particular day has been considered."

"Don't you think it is time for such consideration?"

"The subject," answered the trader with discretion, "is one that may well interest the lucky man, but I have been very busy."

"What business?" dramatically asked the widow, "can take precedence over an affair of the heart?"

"None, certainly, yet, an employee is a machine that must go and come at the bidding of his business superiors."

"Misericorde! 'tis the way with men! Business, business! And in the meanwhile love lies bleeding and gasping for breath! Ah, monsieur, I fear your sex does not appreciate unalloyed affection. The heart, monsieur, is a creature of mystery. In its commonplace function it is only the life-spring of the body. In its purer, nobler sphere it is the singing brook, the whispering wind, the note of the bird, the call of the soul. Ah, you men do not understand!"

Madame Anne shook her head, but beamed upon him with ponderous refulgence.

"Madame," he responded, "I have all my life been a man of the lone-places. Living in the far north, business has been my passion, and the great cold my rival. Of the ways of other places I know little. I have met Mademoiselle Quivillion, and, I need not say, I have admired her. Now, I think that a young girl should not be harassed on such a point. This being my position, I venture to suggest that Valerie be given time to see me more, and then she can tell more about me."

"But the engagement is a thing of fact, already."

"Quite true. Yet, why hasten the lady?"

"The post needs a mistress," declared Madame Anne, forgetting singing brooks, whispering winds and the rest. "There is need of real management here. If I did not occasionally venture to put in a word on some subjects—quite diffidently, I assure you—things would be in a sad condition. A mistress is needed."

Bruce admitted that she was right, and the conversation continued for some minutes longer. He finally succeeded in making her understand clearly that he thought Valerie should be mistress of her own actions, and not hasten as if a business affair was under way, and the widow agreed to abide by his decision.

"For a short time," she added. "For a short time. For a few days, your ideas shall prevail. Quite properly, monsieur."

She rose and bowed in her most gracious manner, but an undercurrent told him that the matter would soon be pressed upon him again, and more emphatically. Madame Anne did not intend to lose her grasp upon Fort Ever-Beware. Valerie was only a means to the end, and the stake she was playing for must not be sacrificed for a girl and trader.

Bruce left her and went outside. There he found Simeon leaning against a building and gazing straight ahead of him with owl-like solemnity. The trader had an idea and proceeded to act upon it.

"Good morning to you, Simeon," he said genially.

"And a good morning to you, worthy sir," replied the youth. "It is my hope that health goes linked with your body, and wisdom with your brain."

"The first blessing is mine; the second I am not so sure of. You are looking well, Simeon, though a trifle sleepy. I trust that you slept well last night?"

"Never better, Louis Bellefauile, trader. I went to bed with the birds that hop on the trees and woke not until they sang their morning ditties. Vraiment! all the chansons are not sung by men!"

"You mention the birds of the trees. You must like the forest. Do you often go there?"

"Not so often, and yet not so little. There are no cooks in the woods, and I like most to be where good meat and fish are, and rubeiboo and richot. Ah! those are—oh! so luscious! Eh? is it not so?"

"All very well. But you look sleepy——"

"Sleep is good. Men see things in their sleep and understand, but when they are awake they see and do not understand."

Bruce felt that this was a stroke to direct to be chance.

"Asleep," he returned, "men see fantastic shapes, and hobgoblins. Awake, they sometimes see things equally interesting and more real."

"I have seen hobgoblins when awake," serenely answered Simeon.

Bruce decided that it was time that he ended the conversation. Simeon was too wise or too ignorant to be lured into confession, and, as it was possible that the youth had not recognized him the previous night, he did not care to charge Simeon directly with having been abroad in the forest.

He tapered the interview off and was walking away when the under-witted one called to him.

"I say, monsieur, don't forget to tell me when the marriage is to be. I know I can smile when I see it. Eh bien, then hasten the day!"

"In due time, good boy; in due time."

Bruce walked on and soon encountered Grio Turcotte.

"I have been looking for you," said the latter. "It has occurred to me that we have been very stupid. Since James Craig will not listen to us, why, the proper way is to get somebody to act as an intermediary. We want such a man, and we want him at once."

"Where is he?"

"Why not Gilday of Fort Auscade? We should have thought of it before now."

"Right! You have the correct idea. Craig will not deny himself to Gilday, and if you can persuade the latter——"

"I must. Shall I go at once?"

Yes."

Grio had no preparations to make. His

Uncle William's Letter

Dear Ledger Readers—I am glad to see that, as a family, you keep working, as well as taking an hour off now and then for recreation, which statement means that you keep sending in piles of subscriptions for the Ledger, and the fact that you do send in subscriptions "good and plenty" proves that you are having the recreation of reading the paper. I have been working all summer, also, but I have seized an hour or two almost every day in which to enjoy myself, which brings me to the main subject of this letter.

HARD WORK.

Copyright by Wm. C. Hunter.

It is a mistaken idea that hard work kills men. Hard work never kills a man. It is the improper care of oneself when he is not working that does the damage.

The more a man does with his brain the less his hands will have to do. The better a man's reasoning and common sense are, the more successful he will be. It requires hard work these days to keep up in the race.

You cannot make a success unless you work hard. Hard work will be much easier if you keep worry out of it.

Hard work brings success, but to do hard work, the machinery must be in good order. You must keep your constitution up, you must have plenty of sleep and you must learn to eat and breathe properly.

No story of success has ever been truly written that did not depict hard work in every line.

Success comes by inches, not by leaps and bounds. Success is the pushing forward each day by hard work.

Burn the candle at one end only and you replace each day what you have burned, by rest and recreation. By burning the candle at one end only and replacing it fully each day, your candle will not burn out.

You see, I keep preaching, "Take care of your health," for there is nothing in this world so sweet as just to be well. Of course, that is not everything by any means, but "to be well" is the basis on which the structure of success and happiness really rests. Then sometimes your body may seem fairly well, but your mind is "out of fix." In that case, about the best thing you can do is to read interesting stories that "come out all right," and forget your crankiness by reading jokes and laughing at funny pictures. So in offering you the Ledger I offer you a real medicine for the mind. Reading the Ledger may be better than buying patent medicines, you see. So, aside from the pleasure you may get out of it, you may find it an actual help in retaining your health. Try it. UNCLE WILLIAM.

gun was in his hands, and that was enough. It was arranged that Bruce should say that he had gone to Fort L'Esperance, and this, it was hoped, would shut off all suspicions.

He left the post, promising to make the trip as quickly as possible and return to do his part at Ever-Beware. His departure gave Bruce a feeling of gloom. Bold and self-reliant as the trader was, he had leaned upon Grio as on a rock of reliable support. Now, he was wholly alone, one man in the midst of those who, if the truth was known, would be his bitter foes.

He was yet to learn what the parting really meant.

Shortly after Grio's departure Auguste Pageau came in from the forest. He had been out with a party of laborers to get articles needed at the fort. These they had intended to bring home by boat, but, once there, it had seemed better to pack them, and he had been sent to secure what was needed.

Reaching the river, he was about to swim across when he saw a raft by the bank. It was one constructed by the children of the post and used by them in play. It was crude but he appropriated it, crossed the water, went to the fort and secured a dozen portage-straps and some other articles.

With these he returned to the raft.

Bruce had all this while been standing by the outer wall of the enclosure. Auguste had addressed him briefly, but the trader was thinking seriously, and his replies, though courteous, were mechanical.

With his mind still preoccupied he unconsciously watched the half-breed propel his frail craft. The river was partly crossed when there was a sudden stir on Pageau's part, the raft seemed to tilt up, the voyageur rose a little ways, there was more confusion, and then Bruce saw the construction break up wholly and leave Auguste floundering in the water.

This seemed trivial, for he could swim with fish-like skill, but the trader had a surprise when he saw his man sink from view. Nothing remained above the surface but the disconnected parts of the raft.

Bruce looked for Auguste. He did not appear. There, and all around, the water was unruffled. Bruce waited for the swimmer to come forth to view, but he did not come.

The trader suddenly grew anxious. He remembered that the bushranger had gone forth with the portage-straps, and, he thought, a tracking-line, dangling about him. The question suddenly presented itself, Had he become entangled in the mess?

Bruce waited for no more. Swiftly he ran to the bank and plunged in. He knew just where Auguste had gone down, and he directed his course accordingly. Swimming briskly he reached the spot and dived without delay.

That day Auguste had the benefit of the one chance sometimes presented to men. Successful in the first trial, Bruce found his hands closing around the half-breed. Holding fast, he rose to the surface. Auguste, enmeshed in the portage-straps, was an insensible burden.

As Bruce directed his gaze ashore-ward he happened to see a fire-bag floating near. It was a small matter to give heed to then, but he mechanically caught it in his hand. Then he bore his burden to the bank. Quickly untangling the folds of the lines, the rescuer called for help and efforts were soon being made to revive the victim of the accident.

Auguste was tough, and under these ministrations he soon showed signs of returning life.

It was at this stage of affairs that Bruce chanced to see the fire-bag again, lying where he had dropped it. He picked it up, and, wondering at the richness of it, examined it closely. Then he saw something more than richness.

Upon a fancy pendant was written a name.

"Louis Bellefauile!"

Fresh wonder fell upon the trader. He had never seen this before. How had it come to Fort Ever-Beware? Imagination quickly bred uneasiness.

Auguste was fast recovering, and presently he sat upright. His expression, at first stupid, soon changed to one of vivacity.

"Parbleu! I see it!" he exclaimed. "I have been drowned. I was dead; I live again. Le diable! the tump-line gripped me like a panther; it bound my arms and legs; I could not swim; the water filled me full; I sank; I died! My curse on the tump-lines. Now I am myself. Who saved me—hein?"

"It was Monsieur Bellefauile," replied a fellow bushranger.

"Ah, is it so? Monsieur Bellefauile, I thank you. You have a good man still with you. Voila, you cannot kill this little child!"

Auguste snapped his fingers and swaggered in a way not wholly pleasant. His brief thanks to Bruce were careless and indifferent.

The other men drifted back to the fort and Bruce was left alone with the bushranger.

"Auguste," he said, "I found this fire-bag floating near where you went down. It has a name upon it, and the name is Louis Bellefauile. Do you know anything about it?"

Pageau looked at the fire-bag. Well did he know what it was. After he robbed the sleeping coureur de bois in the forest, and hid his plunder in the tree, he had so far yielded to temptation as to go back and get one article to feast his eyes upon. Strangely enough he had never noticed the name on the fire-bag.

Now he felt that there was need of lying, and he went about it bravely.

"Monsieur, I never saw it before," he replied serenely.

"Then how came it floating where I found it?"

"Sacre bleu, how? I do not know. Truly, it is as strange as that an old voyageur was drowned by a tump-line. It is a strange world we live in—is it not so?"

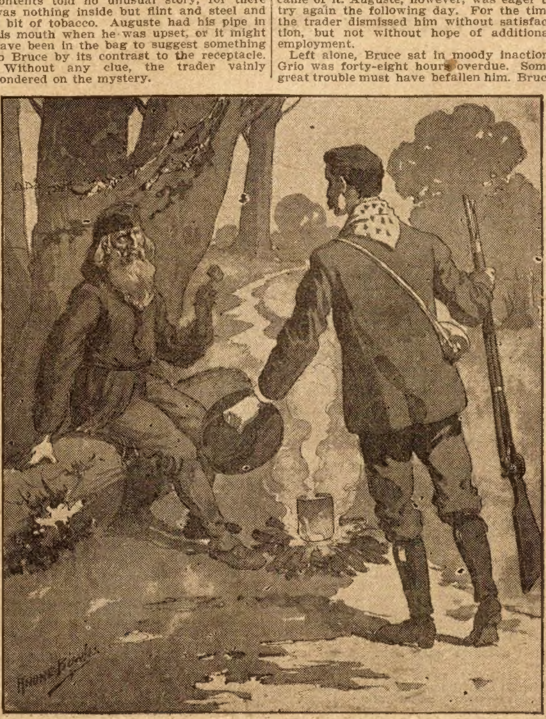
Auguste laughed merrily, and Bruce, annoyed by his levity, briefly told him to take the portage-straps and tackling line and go in a safe boat to the other bank. Auguste went, but with thoughts that overlooked gratitude for his recent deliverance.

"Oh! the beautiful fire-bag!" he muttered. "I have lost it. Plague on the luck! You are abused, Auguste! Why did not the trader say, 'Good man, accept this as proof of my gratitude that you still live!' But he kept it. Bellefauile is a stingy pig!"

Greed and ingratitude filled the bushranger's mind, and, thus, Bruce of Athabasca was still without information that the father of the real Louis Bellefauile was advancing toward Fort Ever-Beware.

Nevertheless, the discovery dwelt heavily on the trader's mind. A fire-bag marked Louis Bellefauile! What did it mean? How had it come where he found it? Its contents told no unusual story, for there was nothing inside but flint and steel and a bit of tobacco. Auguste had his pipe in his mouth when he was upset, or it might have been in the bag to suggest something to Bruce by its contrast to the receptacle.

Without any clue, the trader vainly pondered on the mystery.



"Sit by, stranger, sit by!"

Grio Turcotte had been expected home by night. He did not come. All the next day Bruce looked for him in vain. Uneasiness had developed into serious alarm. Grio was not to be doubted for a moment. What then, kept him? He had gone into a region where lawless men did violent deeds.

What had happened to the guide?

CHAPTER XIII.

BRUCE HEARS STARTLING NEWS.

Another morning found Grio still missing, and Bruce painfully worried, called Auguste Pageau to him. The half-breed seemed a poor friend in time of adversity, but he was a skillful woodsman, and as reliable as any man the trader had. Bruce explained what was necessary, and bade him take to the trail and follow where it led. Grio must be found, if alive.

Auguste went with alacrity. To him light work at the post was hardship, but the severest drudgery of the woods was pleasure.

He returned alone, at nightfall. That he had made zealous endeavor was plain. He was mud-covered, and, hardy as he was, he showed signs of weariness.

"No news?" asked Bruce quickly.

The bushranger shrugged his shoulders and scowling blackly at nothing in particular, acted for a moment as if he would maintain sullen silence. Then his mood abruptly changed and words flowed in a torrent from his nervous lips.

"Vraiment!" he exclaimed, "I am beaten! I follow, follow follow! What use? I find him not. I hunt; I strike his trail; I go on. Grio, he walk to Rackalong. There he take canoe and paddle on. Eh bien, I hunt the river, and I find where he land; the canoe is there. He walk straight toward Fort L'Esperance. I go after. Farther, farther! Little boy Auguste now run like a dog after the fox. He laugh, he whistle; he make the joke. He say, 'Hola, Grio is yonder!' But when he get there, Grio is somewhere else. The heart sink in my breast. I go to—here!"

He caught up a convenient stick and began to mark on the ground.

"I go along here—see, monsieur? The trail is plain. All to this spot, monsieur. Then? Le diable, what? No footprint, no trace, no nothing. I hunt long, for I am one who has been a trailer since I was first lifted from cradle. My pride, it is aroused. I will not fail—but I did fail!"

He flung his swarthy head back with a jerk and scowled blackly.

"The trail ended there?" asked Bruce.

"As if Grio had been a bird."

"Did you find signs of a struggle, or of violence?"

"No. But I find no more. As well had I tried to cut the air with my knife. I run to Fort L'Esperance; I ask for Grio; they have not seen him. Eh, mon camarade!"

"Did you circuit around where the trail ended?"

"Many times and far. Like the dog I put my nose to the ground; like the dog I twist my eyes. Grio is mortal; he cannot have dissolved and gone like the dew. Alors, he must have left some sign; so I argue. I act accordingly. Monsieur Bellefauile, 'tis a black day when an old trailer comes home to roost with no food in his mouth!"

Always a bundle of nerves, Auguste was now so beset by outraged pride and chagrin that he looked ready to fight or weep on the least provocation. Bruce could not doubt his good faith.

He asked numerous questions, and the bushranger answered promptly, but nothing came of it. Auguste, however, was eager to try again the following day. For the time the trader dismissed him without satisfaction, but not without hope of additional employment.

Left alone, Bruce sat in moody inaction. Grio was forty-eight hours overdue. Some great trouble must have befallen him. Bruce was astute enough to suspect that the leading of the trail toward Fort L'Esperance had been a device on Grio's part to avert notice from the Northwesters, as well as that the disappearance of his trail had been a scheme of his to frustrate inquisitive eyes; but all this did not bring the guide back.

He had surely met with calamity.

Where, now, was Bruce's strong right hand of support?

The trader considered the matter fully, and arrived at a decision. He would go himself on the trail. He was as good at the business as Auguste Pageau, and he could work more intelligently than the half-breed. Knowing that Grio's purpose was to go to Fort Auscade, he believed that the trail should be sought between the point where Auguste lost it and the Hudson Bay post.

This he dared not say to his man, but he could hunt there alone.

"I will go in the morning," he decided.

For a time this quieted him, but unrest returned. He considered a new idea and arrived at a decision. He would himself go to Fort Auscade at once. If Grio had been there he would learn of the fact—if he could—and, if not, he would try to do what the guide had gone to accomplish. Unless Gilday of that post refused him speech he would get one man of the Hudson Bay Company to listen to his story.

Equipping himself, he told Clerk Ingram that he was going out, but without giving any hint as to his errand or course of travel. This done, he left the fort and was soon threading the forest.

Uneasy as he was concerning Grio, the solitude brought a degree of composure and his mental strength increased. Life in the far north had taught him the lesson of self-reliance, and he insensibly fell into old habits. He hailed land and water, tree and bush, the sentinel stars and moving wild creatures as friends and companions, and walked the woods with a bold, easy step.

He was a man at home.

Had he known where to find a boat he would have gone direct to the Rackalong river and shortened his journey by the use of the oar, but this he could not do. The only way was to travel swift and far, and make the entire trip on foot. It was a hard night's task, but it did not dispirit him.

He was not to see Fort Auscade that night.

Not more than five miles had he gone when he saw a fire in the distance. This he could not ignore if he wished to, for Grio might possibly be there. He drew near, saw the blaze more clearly, and discovered a single man bending low over the outer rim of the fire, as if seeking the warmth of the fire.

Bruce eyed him closely. He was big and bony, and clad in garments wholly made of skins. These, and his long hair, were ragged and unkempt and he was not wholly prepossessing; but the hair was very gray with age, and he had an appearance both meek and forlorn.

After brief consideration Bruce went forward. He was seen in return, but the man kept his place and made no motion to grasp the long gun by his side. Presently he raised his hand and waved the trader a kindly welcome.

"Sit by, stranger; sit by!" he directed, amicably. "There is room for us both; though I doubt not that your young blood runs too readily for cold to touch you in such weather. Not so I, for the blood of seventy-five years is torpid."

"Comrade," Bruce replied, "I thank you for your welcome. We are well met."

"You say well. The fire is mine, its privileges yours. Let us talk together, smoke together and sleep on bordering spots of earth."

"You do not ask whether I am Hudson Bay or Northwester."

"Nor do I care. Man is what God has made him; it is only his deeds that he is master of here. The rival companies squabble, but I take no part. Why should I? I am a free trapper."

"A noble calling. Yet, this is not the trapping season."

"Nor do I carry traps. I am on my way eastward, bound to Fort Underwood. I travel slowly, for I have been ill. Two full weeks I lay abed at Fort Auscade, and I am only just from there now."

Bruce felt his spirits rise.

"May your strength meet your every need, comrade. A free trapper! Ha! I know one who has done something as a free man—Grio Turcotte."

"I saw him once five years ago."

"Not since?"

"No."

"I had thought that, perhaps, he was even now at Fort Auscade."

Bruce saw another hope fade away, but the trapper had opened an avenue of infomation he did not neglect. Skillfully leading him on, he caused the old man to speak of Fort Auscade, and he heard all that he could desire in some ways. The trapper had been there when Jacques Larade made his unavailing attempt to surprise the place. All this the trapper knew of, but he did not know how warning had come to Gilday. He spoke of later matters there.

"Ah, me!" he said, anon, "there is a hot temper at the fort. Long ago it was known that one Louis Bellefauile had been sent for by the Northwesters from a distance, because he was a man of great determination. Well, he is now in this district, and the Bay men think they see fresh mischief in the way of the rival company. They say that Bellefauile has stirred their enemy up, and word has gone around that Bellefauile must pay the price.

"What price?"

The trapper shook his head and sighed.

"His life!"

Bruce was silent. Startled, not because of danger to himself, but lest evil come to the Bay Company, he fell speechless for a moment. Fate seemed to have conspired to make it impossible for him to reveal his identity and mission to the Bay men.

"And this spirit has really started?" he finally asked.

"Started? Why, man, it has run like wildfire through all the district! There is none so poor and humble of the Bay Company as to give Bellefauile a kind thought. Men have loaded their guns, saying: 'This bullet is for Bellefauile!' There is madness in the district!"

Bruce leaned forward, took a fresh coal and relighted his neglected pipe. Twice he drew a deep breath and then calmly replied:

"More threatened men die in bed than out of it."

"Fortunately, yes. Still, Bellefauile will fare badly if he ever is seen at Fort Auscade."

Conversation continued, and Bruce shaped it as he wished. All the while he studied his neighbor. The trapper had been a bold man in his day, and often rash, but age had softened his temper without impairing his mind. Good will to man was his ruling impulse, and aversion to violence his everyday companion. This Bruce saw, and he laid a new plan.

Recalling the fact that the trapper was on his way to Fort Underwood, he asked him

(Continued on page fifteen.)

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It's easier to talk philosophy than it is to live up to it.

Some people act as if they had a corner on goodness.

Many a man makes a fool of himself by acting smart.

The hard part about an easy job is the getting thereof.

The more money you have the more you can get with it.

Even a society bud doesn't care to marry a blooming idiot.

Many a man who thinks he is right, doesn't go ahead.

When it comes to giving advice lazy men usually work overtime.

No man ever acquired a lasting brand of popularity by knocking.

Every man owes himself a living, and it's up to him to get busy.

Don't make up your mind until you hear the other side of the story.

It's as easy not to do things as it is to tell others how to do them.

Every time a married man starts to settle down his wife stirs him up.

The palmist only awaits an opportunity to grasp the hand of fortune.

It's usually the loud talker who is getting the short end of the argument.

The path to success is paved with good intentions that were carried out.

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A man has about as much use for his poor relations as his rich relatives have for him.

Ask yourself this question: "Do I expect of my friends more than I am willing to give?"

Every man is firmly convinced that there is the making of a hero concealed about his person.

The man who attends strictly to his own business seldom has a headache the next morning.

What has become of the schoolboy who couldn't write a letter without sticking out his tongue?

To the suburbanite life seems to be made up of mowing the lawn and shoveling snow off the walks.

The man who takes up a lot of room in a street car may not occupy any space at all in the hall of fame.

Most men must be proud of their foolishness, judging by the way they don't try to keep it under cover.

When a man has an excuse for going downtown every night it's a pretty sure sign that he is married to the wrong woman.

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Or, THE WOMAN IN RED

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CHAPTER XVII.

THE HOUSE OF THE WOLF.

DICK TRESSIDER reached the fourth floor of this forbidding rookery quite ready to drop with fatigue, and yet the prospect of bringing Lala back to the doctor's house cheered him on. The plan suggested by Rocco was an admirable one, and sufficiently explained his reasons for the visit.

When, in response to his rather timid knock on the door it was opened, just wide enough to admit of a large head being thrust out. He knew from the brief description he had had that this was Foggaro, who dealt in kids and other articles of commerce.

The Italian might look a bandit, but his face was smiling as he asked in a deep voice what the young man wanted.

"I am," said Dick, lying unblushingly, "the manager of a side show at Coney Island, and I should like to hire a small girl of five or six, who must be pretty, to play the part of a fairy queen in a spectacle. She will have nothing to do but sit still and look well. Got such a thing on hand?"

"Ai," exclaimed Foggaro with a broader grin, "you come at a gooda time. Tomorrow you be too late, mebbe. I got a leeta lady. Beautiful as a Madonna. She make for you mucha da mon. You bet! But come in, we hava da talk. I no let her go for cheap mon. She da queen of da bunch!"

He opened the door wide enough for Dick to enter a room that was fitted up something like an office, though it contained a bed, and a large picture of Garibaldi, in a shirt of the most sanguinary hue.

There was a table in one corner of the room on which stood a bottle and two glasses, the latter containing dregs of wine. Mr. Foggaro had, perhaps, been entertaining a friend when Dick knocked on the door.

"Well, how much you pay bya da mont' for da kid?" he asked. "She same as angel an' no cheap," and he grinned, showing his ferret-like teeth.

"I must see the youngster first, before I make any promises," replied Dick. Once assured that the child was really here, he would find some excuse to withdraw, to notify the police. He did not have the means to squander in this reckless fashion, even if it was to get the little girl back.

Foggaro seemed to be thinking, and at the same time a noise caused him to look in the direction of the sound.

"Well, I geta da kid," he grumbled. "You wait here." With that he withdrew.

After he had been gone some time, and it seemed to the impatient Dick a very long while, in glancing around the room his eyes naturally rested for a moment on the chromo of Garibaldi. Was it his imagination, or did he really see a pair of bright eyes gleaming from the picture? It struck him as very curious, and he drew nearer and looked closely at the daub.

"I certainly am getting foolish through this perplexing business," he grumbled. "The eyes are just as they were lithographed," and to make things doubly sure he laid his fingers on the eyes, for the picture was not covered, and found that they were of enamelled paper just like the rest of it. He was still puzzling over the strange optical delusion that had struck him so forcibly, when the door opened and Foggaro walked in.

"You come wit' me, I show you," beckoning mysteriously to Dick, and the young man followed. The Italian led the way down a dark passage and then pushed open the door of a room. It was large, and filled with half a hundred boys and girls, who were all working silently. Some were making toys, others mixing blacking and sorting strange colored things, while still others were at work over some task, the exact meaning of which, Dick could not determine.

They all glanced up a moment when Dick entered with Foggaro, but at once turned to work again with fresh energy under the Italian's threatening glance.

"You see anything you want here?" asked the Italian, who evidently regarded his charges as articles of merchandise. So saying, he led the way through the scattered groups of young people, descanting on the merits of each little girl whom he was sure would answer Dick's requirements.

The soft-hearted Tressider was moved at the sight of these poor children, working so hard under the flaring gas jets. They all looked stunted and unhealthy and in need of fresh air. Doubtless the majority of these children had come into the hands of Foggaro legitimately, having been made over to him for a certain sum of money by their parents. There might be a few who had wandered into his clutches, and Dick thought he would be quite capable of kidnaping a likely youngster if it could be adroitly managed.

They one and all seemed to stand in awe of the master, and not a few trembled when he stood beside them for a moment.

The circuit of the whole was made, and Dick had seen nothing of Lala, or of any child who could compare with her in beauty. All these youngsters were Italians, he thought, and of low birth, or at least their life of unceasing toil made them appear so.

"I haven't seen anything I want yet," said Dick, bluntly. "Where is this little angel you spoke about? These may all be angels, and I hope they are in a fair way to become so, but there is none so attractive as you described."

The Italian laughed.

"Ah, signor, it is that you are a wise guy, and there is no use trying, what you call, a game on you. I had hopes that you would here find something to your mind, and that you would not rob me of my treasure. Do you think I would place the crown jewel with these pebbles?" waving his hand disdainfully toward the young people. "No, no, I reserved for her a special setting."

"Then don't waste any more time, but let me see this pearl of price," said Dick, interrupting his high flown language. "If we are to do business, have done with joking."

"It may be that she is asleep," said Foggaro.

"What difference does that make? I can see if she suits me, and then we can make a deal, an' I'll send for her in the morning."

"Walk softly, her looks is too valuable to have spoilt for need of sleep," and he led the way out of the large room and along a narrow passage, until Dick had not the slightest idea in what part of the rookery they were at the present time. Presently, after they had gone some distance, he saw the Italian standing before a door with his finger on his lips. When Dick came up with him he said, "Make no noise."

They entered the room softly, though Dick hardly understood the fellow's reasons for being so considerate. It did not seem that he regarded the children under his care as anything but so many little machines.

They were in a small room, and now, when the gas was turned up Dick could not stifle an exclamation of delight when his eyes fell on Lala asleep. He was sorry at once that his feelings had betrayed him. For what would the Italian think? Would he not suspect that Dick had some ulterior motive in coming there? Some other object than to hire a child for a Coney Island show?

"Ah, I couldn't help exclaiming because she reminded me of a little sister I lost many years ago," he hastened to say, but he somehow felt that the Italian, who had been eyeing him curiously, did not believe a word of it. He had delayed a little too long with this explanation.

He governed himself after that and stood looking down at the child, who lay pale and beautiful in a queer box-like bed, her black hair tumbled about her face.

Dick could not help but think, as he looked down at the child, that if he made some excuse and went off to the police, that there was a possibility of the child being spirited away in his absence. Foggaro's suspicions might become aroused and Dick would have all the trouble over again of finding the girl. What was to be done? The house was probably filled with fellow cut-throats and friends of Foggaro's, and how could he evade them all and escape with the child? The Italian was strongly built and would give a good account of himself in a fight, while Dick was not in trim to do much in a test of strength. He had his pistol fortunately, in the inner pocket of his coat where he might reach it without exciting suspicion. He would wait for a favorable opportunity and then——

"Well, what you think—will she do?" asked Foggaro.

Dick was enthusiastic.

"True, she is a little pearl, but perhaps I am not able to pay the price. I am a young man in the business, and it has taken all my spare cash to fit up my place at the Island. What is it that you wish a month for the child?"

"One hunder doll's," said Fogarro promptly.

"One hundred fiddlesticks!" exclaimed Dick. "I could get a prima donna or a three-legged girl for that!"

"I make it fifty, den. I——" but he never finished the sentence, for Dick, seizing his opportunity, had his revolver pointed at the fellow's head before Foggaro suspected the move.

"What d'ye mean by dat?" asked Foggaro, with such a laughing expression that Dick was puzzled and alarmed. It was evident that the Italian was not at all afraid of what might happen.

"Stand there against the wall," he said, giving the Italian a sudden push that drove him against the partition. "Move an inch and I'll blow your brains out!"

Foggaro said nothing, but his lips moved and a mocking smile curled their corners as he contemplated the young man malevolently.

Dick, swiftly stooping over the child, gathered her up, still sleeping, with one hand, while with the other he continued to menace the Italian. It was a hard task to try and manage both at once, but he was nerved up by that time to undertake anything. Suddenly the smile on Foggaro's face vanished, just as Dick felt a crushing blow on the head from behind, and fell across the bed, the little girl falling with hi

CHAPTER XVIII.

POOR DICK.

When Dick returned to consciousness, he was still in the room, and lying on the bed which had contained Lala. The pale light of the gas, which had been turned down low, showed him that he was alone in the room, and that the child had been removed.

It had been, perhaps, a hardy thing to attempt to hold up Mr. Foggaro in his own citadel, but Dick acted always on impulse, and generally repented afterward. When he saw that a thing must be accomplished, he seldom weighed the consequences. He was only able to see one side of the question at a time. There was no reason why the Italian should have been alarmed. Perhaps he had arranged to have some one follow their movements. Then Dick bethought him of the portrait of Garibaldi and the shining eyes. Was it not possible that some one was watching him back of the picture, through holes cut in the eyes of the portrait? He thought it possible, and was even willing to admire such ingenuity.

Meanwhile he was very uncomfortable, for he had been neatly trussed up with cords, many of which were cutting into him cruelly, while an improvised gag, made of a piece of wood wrapped about with rag, had been tied across his mouth.

He must have made some noise while he was twisting about trying to wriggle free, for the door opened, presently, and Foggaro

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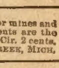

49 GRAND LIQUOR OFFERS!

The Maycliffe Dist. Co., St. Louis, Mo., announces a big cut in the price of Whiskey and other liquors, including Wines, Gins, Brandies, Rum, etc. It has just issued a Bargain Bulletin of 49 Grand Offers, which will be sent free to any of our readers upon request. Standard high quality Whiskies are offered at fully 50 per cent below usual prices. **Old Maycliffe Whiskey** is offered at $3.85 for 4 full quarts, or $7.35 for 8 quarts, express prepaid. The regular price on this famous whiskey is $1.50 a quart. Eight full quarts of Old Scout Whiskey are offered for $4.95. Extra! Jupiter Rye, 4 full quarts $2.75; Elk Mills, 4 full quarts $2.95; Cedar Dew Bourbon, 4 full quarts $3.15, (all shipped in plain boxes). The company prepays express and guarantees satisfaction and safe delivery or will refund the purchase price. Order at once. Maycliffe Distributing Co., 411 Elm Street, St. Louis, Mo.

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stood over him, his black eyes flashing with amusement.

"Ai," he exclaimed. "It is so, that you look best. I suspected you from the first. Yet, if you had paid the mon, much mon, I might have changed my mind."

A cough from the direction of the doorway cut off what else he might have said, and Dick, staring in that direction, was conscious of a shadowy figure standing there.

"Good-night," said Foggaro with a mocking bow," and be glad you have fall in the hands of merciful men." and with this he withdrew, locking the door behind him.

Dick lay there half dreaming, when he was conscious of a strange scratching sound on the wall near the head of his bed. He turned over and tried to think what it meant. There followed distinct sounds, as if some one was trying to make signals. Who, about that place could be interested in his fate? Certainly not little Rocco, the bootblack, who had lured him to the place by arrangement with his enemies! However, it would do no harm to try and respond to these supposed signals, and so he wriggled over so that he could move his fingers, bound though they were, against the wooden partition. The scratching he made was repeated on the other side. Some one certainly wished to communicate with him. He thought he heard the muffled sound of a voice, but could not understand. Then the signals were not renewed and it seemed that he heard the sound of retreating steps. It must have all been a mistake, and he had buoyed himself up with false hopes!

Time passed and he fell asleep in spite of his uncomfortable position and burning head. His slumber must have been very deep, for when he awoke he was in some sort of vehicle that was being driven along at a rapid gait. He could not see anything, for he was half-smothered under a pile of stuff that gave out a tarry smell, like tarpaulin. How long they had been in transit he could not tell, but it seemed to him some hours that the vehicle was clattering over rough streets. In time the rattle ceased. They must have reached some of the new parts of the city, that were just being opened up, and where the roads were unpaved. It was a relief from the jolting which threatened to dislocate every bone in his body. Presently he heard a cry of alarm, which came from near at hand, and a man's voice that seemed to be urging on the horses, while the speed of the vehicle was accelerated. The shout was repeated at some distance, and inclined Dick to think that they were being pursued. Suddenly the wagon gave a sharp turn and halted. The cover was drawn from over him and strong hands lifted him out, and he was dropped to the ground, so heavily, that for the moment the breath was knocked out of his body. He heard the sound of the vehicle being rapidly driven away, and he could see the stars twinkling in a dark blue sky above him.

Why had his captors discharged their freight in this unceremonious manner, he representing the freight? Well, he was not sorry to be out of their hands, even though the prospect of lying there helpless for an indefinite period presented itself.

He made out that he was on a country road, or at least a road that looked like it might belong to farm land. He was not disposed to murmur at having been dropped there, for, perhaps, it was the river they were aiming for when something happened.

He was not long to remain in ignorance of what had taken place. Suddenly a wagon dashed by containing a number of men. The driver was urging his horses with wild shouts, and the occupants of the vehicle were standing up and encouraging him. As the wagon dashed by, Dick caught sight of Doctor Worden, who was one of the occupants. He would have cried out if the gag over his mouth had not prevented him from making any sound but a groan. In a flash the wagon disappeared in a cloud of dust and he was alone.

Who had warned the doctor of his predicament, he wondered? What worried him most just then was his position, for, unable to make a sound, he could hardly hope that he would be discovered in the gloom, even if the doctor and his companions should return over that road.

"I must find some way of attracting their attention," he thought, but what was to be done under the circumstances, when he was so helpless, he could not determine. Meanwhile, he listened expecting to hear the sounds of some distant struggle, for at the pace the Worden vehicle was going, it was sure to overtake the other.

All was silent, however, and not even the noise of wheels was heard, showing that the road was little frequented, at least at night. Would he lie there helpless until he starved to death?

Hours seemed to elapse and nothing happened to disturb the eternal stillness of the place, when suddenly he was startled by some animal licking his face. He looked up and saw that it was a great dog that stood over him, and was wagging his tail at a tremendous rate. Then the animal began to bark loudly and to caper around him.

"Hello! What have we here?" came a voice near at hand, and then a lantern flashed over his eyes. The man who held it stooped down and quickly unbound him, at the same time he sent up a shout. In a moment Dick was lifted to his feet, and he thought a crowd of people had gathered around him. There were really only four, but Doctor Worden was one, two other men in police uniforms, and last, but not least, Rocco.

The sight of the little bootblack roused Dick's ire. "So it was you that dragged me into this trouble?" he exclaimed, making a dash for the lad, who easily evaded him.

"Hold on there a moment!" said Doctor Worden, laying a hand on Dick's arm. "But for little Rocco we would never have known that you had been carried off. As soon as he found you had fallen into the hands of the enemy he ran home to me, and with the help of these two officers, we started the chase."

"Oh, I'm sorry I misjudged him," said Dick. "But I thought he had led me into a trap. And what of Foggaro, the man you were pursuing?"

"Lost track of him, and whoever his companions were in this business," said the doctor. "We came upon their wagon empty and lost trace of 'em. On the bare chance of finding you, we left the vehicle that brought us here, and have been looking around on foot. It was the dog who found you, and we are grateful to the animal, who seems to have sprung up from nowhere just for the purpose." The dog had in the meanwhile disappeared, apparently frightened away by the sudden appearance of so many people.

The wagon having now been brought forward, they all got in, and Dick was made comfortable on a pile of blankets and old coats on the floor, while the doctor sat down beside him, and they returned to the city.

"But Lala, what of her?" was Dick's first question.

"We hunted all over Foggaro's place without seeing anything of the child. It was little Rocco, here, who had been prospecting for himself about the place, who told us that Foggaro and some strange men, had just started off in a wagon. We were not long getting after them."

Dick was for returning at once to where their vehicle had been abandoned, in order to trace Foggaro and find if Lala was with him.

"In the dark it would be impossible," said the doctor firmly. "And where we lost Foggaro and his men there is a perfect jungle, where we could not follow a trail. You have had enough for one night. Don't kill yourself, as you seem in a fair way to do."

As Dick could not very well search for the child alone he was forced to resign himself, but he felt very miserable about the outcome of the affair.

It was proposed by Worden, however, that another investigation should be made of the premises where Foggaro conducted his juvenile industrial establishment.

They found a genial young Italian in charge, who professed ignorance of Foggaro's whereabouts, and even denied that he had ever heard of the gentleman.

"That's the way with these Eyetalians," said one of the policemen. "They'll stand in with each other, and lie and swear to help each other to the last ditch. There ain't no gettin' anything out of 'em unless they wanter talk."

"Is it worth while going all over the place again when we have just been through it?" said his brother officer.

"Why not, for we might have overlooked sunthin'. Come on," and he led the way.

The young man who was in charge of the place offered no opposition, evidently having a respect for the majesty of the law, and he even offered to show the way. Dick followed them, but he had small expectations that anything would come of the search. Rocco, the bootblack, had disappeared.

Again the children of the place were passed in review, in melancholy procession, but Lala was not among them. The officers looked for hiding places in the floor, the walls, and the other parts of the building, above and below, were carefully examined.

They were turning away from the place in some disgust over the failure to make a discovery, when Rocco appeared, panting and dirty.

"You come wit' me. I show you," he exclaimed, pointing upstairs. "Oh, mucha da smart, dat Foggaro, but he no as smart as me!"

"Well, we got to get back to the station," said one of the officers. "I wouldn't place much confidence in what this kid says."

"But I do," replied Worden promptly. "He's done us one good turn tonight and may do another. Come, Dick," and bidding the officers good-night, he took Tressider by the arm and they went up the stairs together, the little Italian in advance.

They mounted to the very top of the house, and here Rocco pointed to the roof.

"I hear some one up dere—dat sound like a kid—a she kid—dat cry."

The doctor got busy, and after some searching, discovered a ladder in a closet, and, having observed a trap door in the ceiling, he mounted, lantern in hand, and finally succeeded in forcing it open. A joyous shout followed his arrival on the roof. But it was not repeated. Dick ran up the ladder with all the speed his bruised limbs would permit.

He looked around him as soon as he was in the open air. Doctor Worden lay on the roof unconscious, but of the child no trace was seen.

This powerful story will be continued in the next week's Ledger. Do not miss it. A lot of great and timely stories will appear in the Ledger during this year. Send in your subscription and you will find yourself repaid many times over. You will be lonesome without the Ledger, so do not let your subscription expire.

His Charge.

The one special charge which Mrs. Locke gave her husband on the eve of her departure for a fortnight's visit to a friend was her fern—her beautiful, wide-spreading fern. "Don't forget it while I'm away visiting, will you, Henry?" she pleaded; and Mr. Locke answered that the fern should be forever on his mind till she returned.

Therefore, when on the evening of her arrival she noticed with a start that the fern was not in its accustomed place, she turned reproachful eyes on her husband.

"Now, my dear, let me tell you," said Mr. Locke, glibly, "if ever a man kept his word, I did. That—er—that fern was on my mind day and night. I scarcely ever forgot it. I watered it—O, I must have watered it four or five times the first two days. I wanted to be sure it had enough.

"Then the water began to run out of the saucer, so I left it alone—entirely untouched, my dear, for the next three or four days, just as you would treat a person who had overeaten.

"Then, when it began to look a trifle dry, I watered it again very faithfully; but it began to look curious, very curious. So I just took it around to the florist, and he said he'd better look after it for a week or so.

"He told me that both Jennings and Wilkinson had brought their wives' ferns to him the day before—same kind as yours. He says ferns are something like children—they miss the person they are used to, my dear."

"I think very likely they do," said his wife, dryly.

Talk is cheap—unless a lawyer is handing it out.

CAN'T DO IT.

I cannot spell—I wish I cood
The dictionary is no gould
To aid a boy in spelling write,
And mother is too busy quight
She never can take time to seigh
Whether a horse should "ney" or nay."
Whether to pen: "The pretty fihour
Came up and withered in an ow'r,"
Or not, and anyhow I trigh
It's not correct or even ny.
I'd like to be a savage, thain
I'd never need to spell agan!

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Undo what tobacco has done.

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Stop the craving. Remove the tobacco blight from your vitality.

Renew the deadened nerves. Know again what it means to be a man, with the vim and energy of youth.

No-to-Bac has done that for 500,000 men. It will do it for you—that we guarantee.

No-to-Bac stops the habit or regulates it—as you prefer.

It does this by feeding the nerve centers—by undoing what nicotine has done.

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You would not return to your present condition for a thousand times what the cure costs.

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See what you would be were it not for tobacco. Then go back if you want to.

No-to-Bac won't prevent that.

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If the results are not satisfactory, your druggist will return what you pay.

If they are satisfactory, the saving on tobacco will more than pay for the cost. The test will, in any event, not cost you a penny.

But first send for our book. We will send with it our discount offer and our guarantee. Cut out this coupon—now before you forget it. Send it and see what you get.

5128 **No-to-Bac is sold by all druggists for $1 per box.**

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Advertisements cost $1.60 per line, including one insertion in the BLADE and one in the LEDGER of the following week's issue. No advertisement accepted for insertion in either paper alone. A two-line is the smallest and a twelve-line, the biggest ad. inserted in this department.

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SIX SHOTS IN FOUR SECONDS WITH QUICKEST hammerless repeater made. Free booklet also tells all about it. Guns from $5 to $27. Write for free catalogue. The Union Fire Arms Co., 268 Auburndale, Toledo, Ohio.

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FOUR CATALOGS FREE if you ask for them. Catalog No. 10 is about Furniture, Carpets, Sewing Machines. Cat. No. 20, Stoves. Cat. No. 30, Columbia Graphophones. Cat. No. 40, Pianos. We sell on credit. Spiegel, May, Stern Co., 1016 35th St., Chicago, Ill.

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TINSEL POSTCARDS AND MAKE MONEY. Easy work and easy money. Sample of your own name tinselled in colors and full instructions how it's done for 2c stamp. Stamets & Fleming, Dept. L. W., Ledgewood, N. J.

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FIVE IN ONE—Delight Biscuit, Cake and Doughnut Cutter, Apple Corer and Strainer. Agents want this and we want agents. Sample 10c. Cleveland Supply Co., 1263-1267 E. 83rd Street, Cleveland, Ohio.

CIVIL SERVICE

GET A U. S. JOB. Bigger pay than you can earn in business. Agreeable hours, etc. Thousands get positions each year. Write for free Civil Service book. International Corres. Schools, Box 1114, Scranton, Pa.

TICKLISH

The Only Way.

"This bathing pool on the lot you sold me is a fake," blustered the irate purchaser.

"In what way, sir?" asked the irate crafty real estate agent.

"Why, you told me I would find the water up to my neck. Instead of that I find it only twelve inches deep."

"Well, er—I meant you would find it up to your neck, sir, if you jumped in head first."

HIS LIMIT.

Said the maiden, "My!
Will you shave my Skye?"
To the barber just for a caper;
Said the dog barber grave,
"French poodles I shave—
But, miss, I'm no Skye-scraper."

Does What She Can.

"His coal bill should be light."

"Is his house different from others?"

"No, but I understand his wife makes it warm for him a good deal of the time."

Exactly.

Wifey—What did that candidate mean when he boasted that he had often put his shoulder to the wheel?

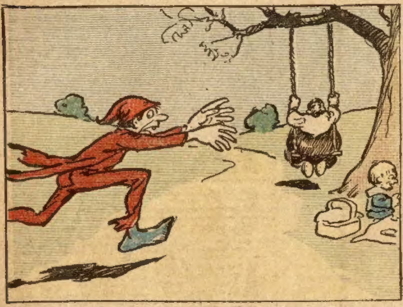
Hubby—That he has helped push along the band wagon.

Soothing.

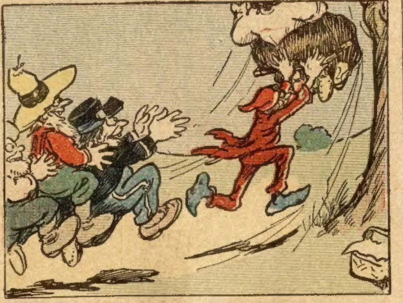
"That was a fine sermon the minister gave us this morning."

"Yes; I don't know when I have heard one that caused me to have such pleasant dreams."

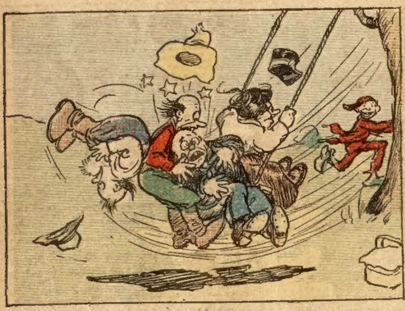
DUSTY DAN'S ESCAPE.



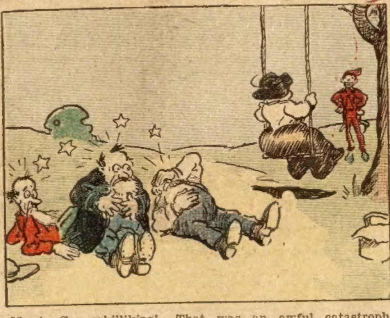
No. 1. Dusty Dan—Pshaw! De jay perlice is so close they almost got hold of me coat tails.



No. 2. I gotter do a stunt mighty quick or—— All right ma'am, I'll swing you!

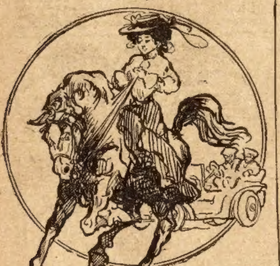


No. 3. —(Bump! Clatter!) Grassville Police Force—Oo-o-o-o! Umph! Ugh! Whoo-o-o!



No. 4. Gee whillikins! That was an awful catastrophe! Nearly wiped out the hull force! An' that pesky hobo histed her, too!

Wifey.



Baggs—Who is that woman on the horse we just passed?

Gaggs—My excuse for carrying life insurance.

A Gentle Criticism.

"The difference," remarked the drug store philosopher, as a motor car barely missed him, "is that wild geese honk continually, while the educated goose is the fellow who forgets to honk."

Changed Her Mind.

"Well, well, there goes Miss Strong. When I saw her last she was posing as a bachelor girl. That's her hobby."

"All that's changed now. She dropped that hobby for a hubby."

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Big profits—quick sales—exclusive territory. Write quick for our liberal money making special offer to agents. Our new self-sharpening scissors are the quickest sellers for lady agents.
NOVELTY CUTLERY CO., 2 3 BAR STREET, CANTON, O.

The Poor Milkman Again.

The milkman was boiling over with indignation.

"And you mean to say my milk don't look right?" he snapped. "Why, lady, this can of milk is a picture."

"Ah, yes," laughed the keen housewife, "a fine water color."

J. P.
Those suffering from weakness and lack of vigor should take JUVEN PILLS. One box will tell a story of marvelous results. This medicine has more rejuvenating, vitalizing force than has ever before been offered. Sent postpaid only on receipt of this advertisement and $1. Made by its originators, C. I. HOOD CO., proprietors Hood's Sarsaparilla, LOWELL, MASS. (z)

Swelled.

First Fish—What's the matter with the little one?

Second Fish—Oh, he's had the swelled head ever since he got off a fisherman's hook and heard him tell another angler what a monstrous big fish he came near landing.

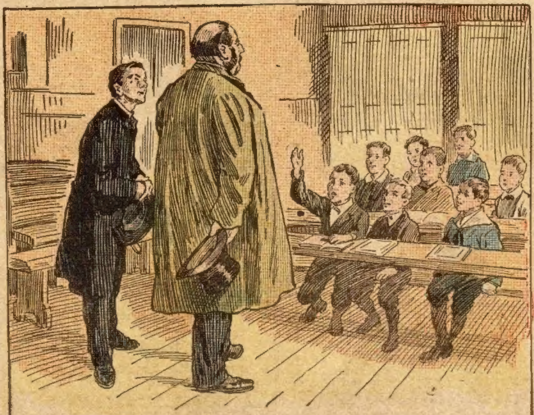
Rather Thick.

Gunner—The great author is going to write a story on steel mills. He is going to Pittsburg to pick up atmosphere.

Guyer—Indeed! And how does one pick up atmosphere in Pittsburg?

Gunner—By the chunk.

SIZED UP BY THE AUDIENCE.



President of School Board (after describing the great advantages now enjoyed by children)—I wish I were you children at school. (Pause; then ingratiatingly) Why do I wish this?

Boy—Please, sir, 'cos you've forgot all you ever knowed!

"THE PALE GIRL"
Did Not Know Coffee Was the Cause.

In cold weather some people think a cup of hot coffee good to help keep warm. So it is—for a short time, but the drug—caffeine—acts on the heart to weaken the circulation and the reaction is to cause more chilliness.

There is a hot wholesome drink which a Dak. girl found after a time, makes the blood warm and the heart strong.

She says:

"Having lived for five years in N. Dak., I have used considerable coffee owing to the cold climate. As a result I had a dull headache regularly, suffered from indigestion, and had no "life" in me.

"I was known as the 'pale girl' and people thought I was just weakly. After a time I had heart trouble and became very nervous, never knew what it was to be real well. Took medicine but it never seemed to do any good.

"Since being married my husband and I both have thought coffee was harming us and we would quit, only to begin again, although we felt it was the same as poison to us.

"Then we got some Postum. Well, the effect was really wonderful. My complexion is clear now, headache gone, and I have a great deal of energy I had never known while drinking coffee.

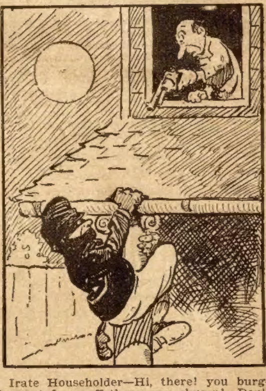
"I haven't been troubled with indigestion since using Postum, am not nervous, and need no medicine. We have a little girl and boy who both love Postum and thrive on it and Grape-Nuts."

"There's a Reason."

Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich. Read "The Road to Wellville," in pkgs.

Ever read the above letter? A new one appears from time to time. They are genuine, true, and full of human interest.

His Chief Concern.



Irate Householder—Hi, there! you burglar, get down off there, you chump! Don't you know the house has just been painted?

FREE DEAFNESS CURE.
A remarkable offer made by one of the leading ear specialists in this country. Dr. Branaman offers to all applying at once, two full months' medicine free to prove his ability to cure Deafness, Head Noises and Catarrh in every stage. Address Dr. G. M. Branaman, 1288 Walnut street, Kansas City, Mo.

STRATEGY.

His grass plot once was trampled down
By all who there did pass
Because they all were tempted by
The sign: "Keep off the grass."

But now the grass grows undisturbed,
For it he has no fear,
For that old sign has been replaced
By this one: "Chiggers here."

LADIES, PRESERVE YOUR YOUTHFUL APPEARANCE.
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With the Summer Girls.

Pearl—Are there many young men down here, my dear?

Ruby—Very few. It is a game to catch them.

Pearl—And what are the rules of the game?

Ruby—Why, 'catch-as-catch-can.'

Useful Accomplishment.

"Every young man should learn to swim," remarked Huggins.

"Yes, that's right," rejoined Muggsby. "A fellow never knows what minute a girl may throw him overboard."

TACKLES

High Spot.

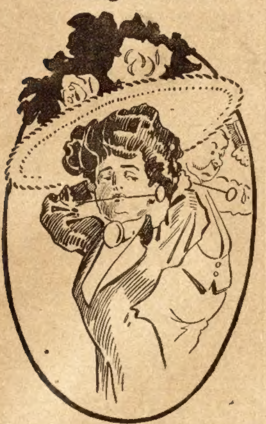
"I am looking for an appropriate name for my new home."

"You say it is the highest spot in the county?"

"The very highest."

"Call it 'The Ace.'"

Looking Forward.



Mrs. Benham—Don't you think, John I'm very economical in getting a hat?

Benham—When that one goes out of style we can use it for a door mat. Sure!

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Harker—So these cigarettes are named after the notorious Raisuli, eh?

Barker—Yes, and they bear an appropriate name.

Harker—Indeed! Are they made in Morocco?

Barker—No, but they have killed so many people.

Unsatisfactory Menu.

Timpkins—I saw Windig partake of a linguistic meal yesterday.

Simpkins—What do you mean by that?

Timpkins—Biffkins made him eat his words.

California Marvels.

Easterner—I see it stated that Tulare Lake, in California, has increased in width and length this year.

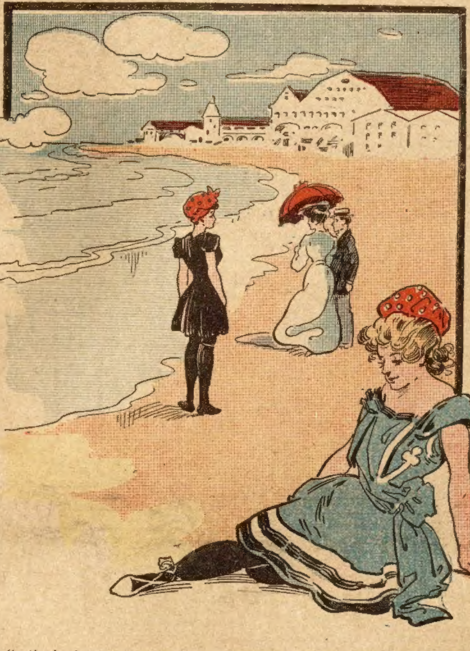
Californian—Shouldn't wonder. California is growing right along.

Playing Safe.

"Are you going to send Graftleigh back to Congress?" asked the reporter.

"That's what," replied the rural politician. "We realize that it will be safer for us to have him there than at home."

SHE KNEW.



He (in the background)—A scandal is very much like a vacant place left by a drawn tooth.

His Lady Friend—That's right. It's hard to keep one's tongue out of it.

Worked Them All.

"And what occupation do you follow, my poor man?" queried the kind old lady as she handed out a gooseberry tart.

"Ah, mum," responded Faded Fagin, as he lifted his tattered hat, "I'm a settlement worker."

"Well! Well! I have often heard of them. And what are your duties?"

"Why, to 'work' every settlement I come to, mum."

No Love Lost.

"I suppose," said the fan on the homeward bound car, "that you are a lover of the national game?"

"Not me," replied the stranger occupying the adjoining seat. "I'm one of the umpires."

The Real Thing.

He—Why do you consider Miss Travers strong-minded?

She—Well, she traveled across the continent three times without mailing a single souvenir post card.

The Farmer's Answer.

"By the way," said the summer boarder, "how do you harvest your ice crop here?"

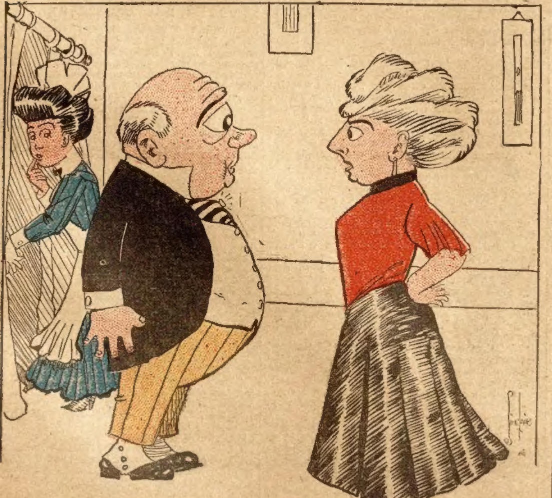
"With an isickle, uv course," answered the old farmer, with a large, open-faced grin.

Father and Son.

The Son—When I reach your age, dad, I hope I'll know more than you do.

The Father—When you reach my age, son, I hope you'll know as much as you think you know now.

HIS WIFE'S FAULT.



She—That's the third housemaid that you've kissed!
He—It's a result of your constant change of help!

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Or, THE DEETMAN DETECTIVES

By General William T. Valentine

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CHAPTER XIII.

"SO SHE told her pitiful little story?" asked one man of the other that same evening.

"Yes, and bravely, but I do not believe it, Nixon."

"That's kind, but——"

"See here, Nixon Quex, I am going to marry your sister as soon as she will let me, but I feel as though we two ought to try and relieve her little heart."

"Does she worry over it?"

"Do you know so little of her as that?"

Nixon Quex, a man of forty, who was almost old enough to be Olga's father, smiled sadly, as he returned:

"When she was a little thing she and I were great chums, but for years I have been an invalid, and she has grown away from me, so that now she is actually a stranger."

"Then you paid no attention to the matter?" Gerald asked eagerly. As long as that lingered in the exquisite girl's mind, just so long would he be unable to induce her to marry him.

The elder man leaned against a table, graceful, languid, his face looking strangely tense under his thatch of snow-white hair.

"She is worried, is she? Poor little thing, suppose I talk with her. See, I was there at the time and know some of the events. This I can tell you. No harm was done her. Careful examination by the best physicans at the time, proved that."

"Are you sure of it?"

"As sure as I am that I stand here," was the reply, spoken with deep emotion.

"Then, why was she left all these years, overshadowed by such a horror?"

"Oh, because women do such things. My stepmother could not bear her. She was a divorced woman when she married my father, in fact, divorced her husband to marry again, but she was punished. Her boy, a charming little fellow, was taken from her and the father, and it was one of the stipulations that neither parent was to have him while under age."

"What a sweet woman she must have been."

"Yes, she was the most fascinating woman I have seen in a long time, and unstable as the wind. Olga takes after her father, who died in the third year of the marriage. Now, Olga was a nice enough child to suit any mother, but this little firebrand hated her and yearned after her son. I didn't know exactly what to do, and tried to offer myself as general pacificator, and my wings were badly singed."

"Yours?"

"Yes. A man makes a fool of himself sometime or other in his life; that time was mine. She played with me and encouraged me, sent me off on an errand and when I returned there was another in high favor, I sulked about, paying more attention to my supposed griefs than to the little one, and her life has been ruined.

"She was a strange woman," Nixon continued. "Not wicked in the usual idea of the world, for much as she loved attention, no one dared the slightest liberty. Long and well as I knew her, I never thought of even touching her hand, save in ordinary, conventional greeting. Still, for all of this, she had enough wickedness bottled up in her dainty little body for a dozen women. Better it would have been for all connected with her if she had never lived," and he sighed so deeply that Gerald wondered if this strange appearing man, so much older looking than his real years, still cherished a love for her.

As though he could read the young man's thoughts, Mr. Quex said quietly:

"No, her image no longer stays in my heart. I have never been able to love another woman, and my life has been without much happiness. My father and I never were congenial, he adored this little daughter, and so in addition to my mother's property which she willed me, I was given but a few thousand, and the remainder of his large property was left to Olga, but a moderate income to come from it for his second wife until her death, when it reverted to Olga."

"And you have loved her in spite of that?"

"Certainly. Why should I be angry at my little sister. She has been very good to me, and given me a comfortable sum."

"When?"

"Yesterday, before you heard that terrible story, so little of which is true."

Gerald stretched out his hand, saying warmly:

"I am glad she did it, and if it is not sufficient, just let me know. What you have told me is worth a fortune, I can tell you," and the two men cordially shook hands, then Nixon asked:

"Shall I go to the girl and tell her the truth?"

Gerald hesitated. He knew the agony it had been to her to have to speak of the matter at all, he was not quite sure of her love for him, and so it seemed as though it would be best to leave her in ignorance for a time at least, so he replied gratefully:

"You are more than good, Nixon, but I would rather tell her after she is my wife," the last words said very softly.

"Capital." slapping him on his shoulder, "capital! Then I'll leave it all to you. Better marry her soon, she is so alone."

"But I am not sure of her love."

"I am. She has never wavered, her fancy for Knight was but the fancy of the moment, and when he drew aside from her when she told him what she thought was true, and you did not, that settled it. Women are so peculiar. By the way, did you ever notice that. Woman may be sweet, beautiful, true, honest, but she is bound to be peculiar, and that last spoils the rest."

"Well, I don't think so," Gerald laughed heartily.

"No, I suppose not, but it makes no difference, you will understand sometime, but I must go," and Quex arose, and nodding, left the alcove in their club, where the two had been talking.

Gerald stretched himself out and his thoughts went into the future, building many rosy dreams of days of yachting along the sunny coasts of France and Italy.

Suddenly he was brought back to earth with a hard bump. Right before him, his head bent forward, hands in his pockets, face like death, was Knight. Gerald saw immediately that he had been drinking and he knew his duty.

"Knight," he said sharply.

The young man turned, looked at Gerald, and waved his hand.

"Well, what in h——l do you want now? You've got her, though I couldn't have taken her under the circumstances, and yet you're right," and he lurched slightly.

"Come here, I've something to tell you."

"Don't want to hear anything, heart's broken," and, although the usually firm mouth was leering, there was such agony in the staring eyes that Gerald arose and drew Knight into the alcove, and repeated what Nixon had told him. The story roused Knight as nothing else could, and as he sat, his face hidden by his hand, Gerald knew that the liquor was gradually fading from his head.

Suddenly Knight arose, and holding out his hand, asked huskily:

"Will you shake with me. You are worthy of her, I was not, trying to steal her away, and then showing a streak of yellow at the critical moment. I couldn't help it."

Gerald had grasped his hand, and said rapidly when Knight stopped:

"I wanted you to know, and to discuss with you whether she ought to be told now."

"No, not now. If you ever have any children tell her then. It would upset her too much."

"I thought that, too, then I attributed it to a yellow streak in my own composition."

Knight laid his hand heavily on Gerald's shoulder, saying huskily:

"See here, old man, she loves you, and now that you proved all right, she loves you even more, but just remember that her fancy did not stay with me, and——"

"And you think it might again if she thought there was no ugly story between you?"

"Not that exactly, but I want to be wiped out of her memory," said poor Knight, who could scarcely understand how she could forget that awful storm and tender love affair, but who realized that his was not the nature to hold her while Gerald's was.

"She will be seeing you."

"I'm going to Panama—good job. For some years I'll be away, and I wish you and her all kinds of happiness," and the two shook hands for the last time in many years.

CHAPTER XIV.

The three detectives sat in their consulting room, each looking grave, and Mrs. Deetman especially so.

Her lovely face was shadowed, and as she sat there, in one of her dainty evening gowns she was fond of wearing for the sake of her two loved ones, whenever her profession permitted, both Raoul and Bruce saw that she was not at all satisfied with something or other. With strangers she could easily conceal her feelings, but with her own, she let her features relax.

"Well, darling," Raoul said gently, leaning over the back of her chair, "dissatisfied?"

"Are you really satisfied yourself?" she returned, leaning back against his arm. The love of these two for each other was very strong, and the story of the wooing of the beautiful Zoza is as romantic a one as ever occurred in any love tale, but we are so continually occupied in retailing their skill as detectives that there seems no opportunity of letting the readers see deeper into their loyal, tender hearts.

Bruce, too, had his own history. His handsome face hid a heart forever broken, but that, too, is a story which must remain untold.

Looking in upon them, no one could have imagined that these three were recognized as detectives of almost unexcelled skill. The two men were in full evening dress, as was Mrs. Deetman. Her dark hair was threaded with diamonds, her beautiful arms and shoulders gleamed with the precious stones, and when her husband took her opera cloak and drew it around her, he thought that its pink brocade was no more delicate than her cheeks, or the ermine lining no whiter than her teeth.

"This is the kind of work I detest," Zoza said, a little wearily, as they descended the stairs to the carriage, and as he shook out his opera hat and adjusted it upon his shapely head, Bruce echoed her sentiments.

Raoul laughed.

"What home people! Now, I like a bit of glittering pleasure. Who knows what we may learn?"

"That's it? We come like honored guests, and yet we are still professionals."

"I glory in our profession, dearest," Raoul said lightly. He knew his wife felt depressed because she had not yet fathomed the mystery of the various robberies. They were now upon an entirely different mission. One of the great rich was giving a magnificent ball, and the three were attending to protect the jewels of the hostess and guests, as well as the magnificent silver and gold ware used in the dining room.

Beneath her low-cut bodice, among her laces and jewels, Zoza carried a revolver; both of the men were armed, and it was not upon any pleasure errand they were bent, so no wonder none felt especially happy, though to do them credit, they had faced death so often that they all regarded it as a matter of fact event. All that ever worried them was the notion of failure.

Bruce always drew back from this special house, where they had so often mounted guard, for it was beneath its roof that he had met the woman who had won his heart, and received her bitter repulse. She was married now; he might meet her any time, and so, although it was five years since she had laughed at his love, he still loved her and had never for an instant placed another in her place.

Thus it was. upon this particular night, they all felt a little tired and low-spirited, as they arrived among the earliest guests, and were met by their hostess with especial cordiality.

She was a little too languid to have taken that much trouble had it not been that she knew that the safety of her precious articles, as well as those of her guests, depended upon her skill in hiding from every one the fact that these distinguished-appearing people were detectives.

Zoza's soft red lips curled a little as she mounted the stairs toward the dressing room, but she said nothing, and from that moment from beneath her long, curling eyelashes, her eyes saw everything. They noticed many things unseen of others, and she could not help thinking to herself, as she noticed a little love scene between her hostess and a lad of barely half her years, that it was a good thing that she had been summoned to report solely upon the thieving of jewelry and dinner-plate.

"If I were to disclose how many other things are stolen in addition to those that these people consider valuable, I rather expect that there would be considerable work for the divorce court." As she strolled about, her lovely face care-free, she mused again, and this time it was upon the superiority of her husband and brother over the other men, and as she did so her delicate hand was laid upon the arm of a cold, keen-appearing man, and her voice said in so low a tone that only he heard:

"Please come with me."

Startled out of his composure, the man turned, and unconsciously slipped an emerald bracelet into his bosom, where, in his vest was a special pocket, made for just such purposes.

"Pardon me, did you speak?' he asked, bowing very profoundly.

"Must I repeat?" Zoza asked softly, turning toward him a tiny jeweled star, a moment before covered by costly lace.

"Give me your arm," she continued, and without trying to escape, he held out his arm, just as if to a dancing partner, and, as she accepted it, he heard the deadly click of a handcuff and knew that this beautiful woman had fastened his arm to hers.

The man was desperate. For years he had gone among people as a social highwayman, and had never before been detected. His standing, his whole freedom was at stake. Suddenly he looked still closer at the beautiful face and an oath escaped his lips.

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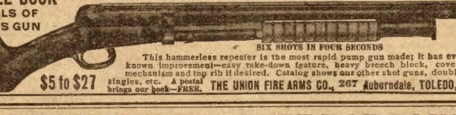

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Mrs Deetman, looking at him, said coldly:

"I must ask that you refrain from such language," and slid her hand into his bosom, extracted the costly bracelet, deftly hiding it.

The man laughed harshly:

"I suppose you think I don't recognize you?" he sneered. "If you think that you can pick me up in such a way, I'll show you better."

She smiled a little tauntingly, looking so sweet, beautiful and wonderfully clever, that she drove him mad with rage, and as they were just passing the draped entrance to the greenhouses, he pulled her in, and in an instant, out over the perfumed air, mingling with the sounds of mirth and music, rang a woman's voice:

"Help!" followed by a strange call that made two exquisitely dressed men start on a run for the door. Fast as they ran, however, others had gathered, trying to render assistance, but powerless, for it was a scene never to be forgotten. A strong man, mysteriously fastened to a lady, also possessed of considerable strength, was destroying the wonderful plants and flowers, and such a disturbance did they make, that no one could approach very near, until the two men arrived, who had responded to the call. Disregarding utterly all the danger, they sprung to the woman's relief, and the people stared. One man caught the scoundrel, and held him like a statue, so quiet was he, while the other bent over the almost unconscious lady. There was a slight noise, and Zoza fell into her husband's arm, but not fainting. She was not the kind of a woman to faint. Almost instantly she was standing beside him, smiling, while under their cover Bruce hustled the captive from the conservatory by a back entrance.

Few could have told that Zoza had been so rudely handled, as she smilingly explained.

"A pickpocket, whom I fought because he was perhaps unduly fond of my diamonds," and as she walked out, on her husband's arm, the crowd disappeared, and many who had been there were surprised to learn that there had been any such occurrence.

Raoul had learned to read his wife's face fairly well, and he knew that she had been injured, so guided her toward the room set aside for the detectives.

"He didn't get away?" she asked hastily.

"Bruce was on hand," came back, and she was perfectly satisfied.

"Why didn't you call one of us?"

"Caught him redhanded."

Raoul said nothing of the pain he knew she was enduring, but opening the door, with the key he had been given, he drew her in the room, then started so that she nearly fell.

Bruce looked up, saying in his smooth, low voice:

"I'm glad you have come, for this gentleman has been trying to induce me to see my way clear to letting him go, and I'm tired of talk along the same lines. By the way, sis, he has offered an emerald bracelet, and then made the place hot when he couldn't find it."

Zoza sank in a chair and said weakly:

"Here it is, I have done my duty, but take him away and me home," holding out her injured arm, then suddenly she jumped to her feet and talked with the men for a moment rapidly.

"Well, as you think," Raoul said quickly, and she approached the man, and looking at him, said coldly:

"You see, now, I am on your track. You may go now, but better not try to leave town in any way. Come," and she opened the door, which led out upon the street.

Half an hour later, with a terribly bruised and torn arm carefully bandaged and hidden underneath her laces, Mrs. Deetman was back at her post of duty, as were also her husband and brother, and the man whom she had released, although his heart was beating uneasily and his nimble fingers were carefully kept where they belonged. The detectives were yet unknown, and prevented several losses, although Mrs. Deetman continued her efforts at eyework, for she was too faint to attempt anything else.

When they entered their carriage, and her aching head was laid on Raoul's shoulder, while Bruce supported her so as to prevent any jolt, she sighed out:

"Perhaps we have acted injudiciously, but I think we had the prime mover in the twelve robberies."

"Of course, if he is the one, there was nothing but to let him go," Raoul agreed, but Bruce said nothing. He had his own ideas, and they did not in the least agree with those of the Deetmans.

CHAPTER XV.

"Well, Petty, when can I claim my bride?" Gerald whispered.

Olga rose from the couch on which she had been sitting with him, and walked to the window. Drawing aside the curtain she looked out into the exquisite moonlight.

"I think I can ease your unhappiness and make you feel really settled. Now, you worry yourself and scarcely know what you want," and he held out his arms.

Still standing behind the curtain, she asked pleadingly

"Are you sure?'

"Sure of what, darling?" and he was by her side, his cheek pressed against hers.

"That you really want to marry me?" and something came up in her throat.

Gerald took a sudden resolution, with his arms about her, he told the girl what Knight had said, and he could feel the slender figure shiver, as Olga listened. When he finished she turned her face toward him, and nestling it under his chin began to cry, as only those who suffer can, low, deep and unceasingly.

"But, dear, I told you just to relieve your little mind," he pleaded, for he could not bear to see her cry.

"I know," she sobbed, then he felt she was endeavoring to control herself, and drew her into a deep, hollow chair and knelt beside her, his arms about her so that the beautiful face could rest upon his shoulder.

At last she spoke brokenly, but without tears, asking earnestly:

"So Nixon told you that he knew it all to be true?"

"Knew what, dear?"

"What he told you?'

"Of course."

"A great load has been lifted from my shoulders," she said simply, then added, "So you want me to marry you soon?"

"As soon as you will."

Once more she went to the window. Her eyes were restless, her cheeks flushed. He rose, but came no nearer, for he knew in this delicate situation he had to walk very carefully.

Then she turned, and with a thrill in her voice, cried:

"Gerald, dearest, I'll marry you whenever you say!"

"That will mean immediately."

"I mean it," was her quick reply, and without waiting for any change of mind, Gerald, after an ardent kiss, started out, and running down the steps, sought the nearest clergyman. When they came back she was awaiting them, dressed in a charming white gown, her eyes sparkling, her cheeks flushed. Yet, until his ring was on her finger, and the clergyman's words said that which made them man and wife, Gerald scarcely felt sure of his wife, and he can hardly be blamed, but as they stood alone by that same window a sense of peace stole over them, and both felt content, and knew that for once, two, who were intended for each other had come together.

They said nothing, but stood there, her head on his shoulder, his hand tightly gripping her little left hand with its wedding ring, when they started, and bent forward.

Along the pavement a man was walking. He seemed contented and was whistling as he came along. Suddenly, without the slightest warning, he fell, or rather slid to the curb, and rolled over, then, while they stood in frozen dismay, a muffled figure sprung upon the unconscious man, and skilled hands went through his pockets. As that was being done Gerald and Olga roused, and noiselessly crept to the street, but quiet as they were the muffled man heard, and springing to his feet, disappeared, with Gerald in hopeless pursuit. As he started Olga bent and picked up a handkerchief. She glanced at it for a moment, then turned white as death, and concealed it in her dress, before she bent over the fallen man.

"He is not dead," she whispered, "but is another victim," and turned eagerly toward Gerald as he returned, afraid to leave his bride exposed.

"It's another robbery!" she gasped.

"Just that," Gerald replied, "but we must get him inside," and, with the help of the old family butler, Gerald did, and worked as best he knew how over the one whom fate had laid helpless at their door, just as he had been.

At last the man sat up, rubbed his eyes, looked about him, and then said with a short laugh:

"I have been looking out for No. 13, and bless me if I haven't found him."

Gerald recognized him, and said heartily, holding out his hand:

"Mr. Deetman," and Raoul returned:

"All right now, I think, thanks to you."

This story will be continued in next week's Ledger, presenting the readers with some very interesting episodes and situations. Its perusal to the end will highly reward you. If you are not a subscriber to the Ledger, you are strongly urged to send in your subscription at once. Every family should take the Ledger, as humor and stories and pictures make life brighter and pleasanter for all, bringing health and entertainment and doing every one good. You will never miss the $1.00 for the subscription, while if you do not subscribe you will certainly miss the Ledger. Be wise and attend to this today.

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A million acres of government land in Tripp County, S. D., opened to homesteaders October 5th to 17th. Dallas and Gregory, S. D., the only towns on the reservation border, reached by Chicago & Northwestern Ry., the only all-rail route to the reservation. Entry must be made in person at one of these towns. (Or affidavit can be filed at O'Neill or Valentine, Neb., and forwarded.)

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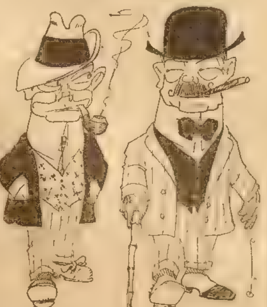
* * *

A Problem.



"A man is the most sensible of all animals, is he not?"

"Certainly."

"Then I wonder why he doesn't wear a loose, comfortable collar, like a dog's."

Springs at Bottom of Sea.

Bahrein Island, in the Persian gulf, is said to be the hottest place on earth. It is usual there to find the thermometer at 140. On the coast of this island, where practically all the people live, there is no fresh water, which is needed above all things in so seething a temperature.

And it is to be had from the bottom of the sea. Here and there scattered over the floor of the harbor of Bahrein are springs of fresh water. There waters well up through the sand to mingle with the salt water of the sea. It would seem a difficult task to find these threads of fresh water amid the ocean's volume, but the thirsty islanders are thought to have found them ages ago and to have passed on their location from generation to generation.

A diver equips himself with a water bag made of skins, the mouth of which is closed, and descends to the bottom of the harbor at a point where one of the springs issues. The bag is carefully inverted over the current of fresh water as it flows up from the sand, the mouth is opened, the skin is filled, then the mouth is shut fast and the diver returns to the boat awaiting him on the surface.

One scientist gives it as his belief that at some period in the shadowy past that which is now the harbor's bottom was not touched by the sea. The springs were then on the shore and ready for the islanders' needs. Little by little the sea encroached on the land, but the location of the wonderful springs was not forgotten.—Chicago Tribune.

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BOY'S
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The Young Treasure Hunters:

Or, THE BOOTY OF DEMON ISLAND

By Major Albion F. Grant, = = *Author of "The Boy Who Dared," "Jack and Jerry," etc.*

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Begun in No. 36, September 5. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, or our agents, or by mail from office of publication.

CHAPTER X.

THE FIFTY-SEVEN OPALS.

"WHY did we ever come to this demon land?"

These words falling from Fred Farley's lips, in accents of terror, were enough to still the beatings of Tom Gaylor's heart.

Eagerly and breathlessly he leaned forward to see what had called them forth.

The object at which Fred had pointed, lay at his feet, and the light of the torch fell upon it.

It was a human hand, still bleeding, and near it lay a curiously-shaped knife, the like of which the boys had never seen before.

That it was Van Hutton's hand, they did not doubt.

Horrified by their discovery, the boys fell back white-faced and stared at the object.

"This is Bara's work!" cried Fred, when he could catch his breath. "After all, the Yalu is not our friend, but our deadliest enemy."

"It looks that way.. But let us follow the trail."

They proceeded through the forest, guided by the flambeau, until they reached a spot where the blood-trail ended.

The ending was so sudden that they paused and looked at one another.

They were about to retrace their steps when a series of cries fell upon their ears, and they turned to find themselves almost surrounded by a lot of yelling savages.

For a moment the boys were on the point of resisting, but discretion suggested a wiser course and they allowed themselves to be made prisoners.

In another minute they were in the hands of the Yalus, who crowded about them, manifesting all sorts of fury, and for a little while it seemed as if they would be massacred on the spot.

"We're in for it now," said Fred in a low whisper. "We shall pay dearly for our invasion of Yalu-land."

"Don't lose heart for a moment," was Tom's heroic reply. "If the demons find that we are weakening they will treat us accordingly."

"You are right, Tom. I shall not despair again."

They were taken back to the old camp amid the victorious cries of the Yalus, and the camp-plundered of everything valuable. Next they were escorted from the place and hurried through the wilderness in a southwesterly direction.

"We shall probably see the village of the Yalus," Tom remarked. "Perhaps we shall again meet Noleeka, the Yalu girl, and solve the mystery of the severed hand."

The first flushes of dawn were brightening the east when the party descended a gentle rise and came in sight of the Yalu village. One of the foremost savages set up a cry which caused the whole village to swarm from the huts and turn their faces toward them.

The boys kept up stout hearts and were hustled forward with every eye on the alert.

Presently they were halted in the heart of the village, which seemed to contain five hundred people, and in a jiffy were surrounded by the whole population.

A giant Yalu, whose wild dress indicated that he was the head man, stepped in front of the captives and to their surprise addressed them in words which they easily understood.

"What brings the white boys to Leona's land?" he demanded.

"We came not to harm any of you," replied Fred, as he faced the Yalu courageously. "We came here on business of our own——"

"But you have not asked Leona for the privilege."

"We did not know you were here."

"This is the land of the Yalus. Long ago the bad men of Honduras drove Leona's people into exile, and we have lived here ever since."

"We thought we had a right to come to Demon Island on a mission of our own."

"You are treasure hunters."

At this the boys started and looked around.

"It is true that we have come to find a treasure, which cannot belong to the Yalus, though they possess the island. It is not our intention to disturb you, and when we have accomplished our mission we will go back."

"If Leona lets you!" grinned the chief.

Fred said no more, and at a sign from the Yalu chief, they were taken to one of the largest huts and tumbled inside. At the door two stalwart savages were stationed, each one armed with a long spear, tipped with a ferocious-looking point.

"This is getting the booty with a vengeance," observed Tom, with a forced smile.

"It's not getting it very fast, I'll admit," replied Fred in like strain.

"If I could hear of Van Hutton I would be a little better satisfied."

"I suppose that mystery will be solved in time. Just now we must think only of ourselves, and how to get out of this savage trap."

The day passed wearily to the young captives. Some strange-looking food was thrust into the hut, which tasted good, and they fell to with a zest. Evidently their enemies did not intend to poison them. Water, cool and sparkling, was brought them in a native calabash and they found that it greatly increased their strength.

When evening came they were taken from the hut and paraded on the square in the center of the village.

Suddenly Tom uttered a cry and turned toward his companion.

"Yonder is a white girl, or I'm badly mistaken!" he exclaimed. "We are not the only unfortunates in this dilemma."

Fred also had caught sight of the person who had brought forth Tom's exclamation, and for a moment they gazed wonderstruck at what appeared an apparition.

The white girl's face was very pale, and she was looking at the prisoners with astonishment in her eyes.

"She's young and pretty," said Tom. "I wonder how she came to fall into the hands of these demons?"

Fred shook his head and continued to gaze in silence at the fair creature.

They were not left long in suspense as to what was in store for them, for all at once Leona came forward and told them to prepare for the ordeal.

"White boys are to be tried by the great council of the Yalus," announced Leona.

"For what?"

"For invading the land of the Yalus."

"We do not count our coming an invasion."

"But you came without asking Leona."

"Yes, on a harmless little expedition of our own."

"Where is the other one?"

"I would like to have you answer that question," said Fred with a start. "Captan Van's fate is a mystery to us."

"Did the white man go back to the ship?"

"No. He must be in the forest somewhere, mutilated, if not dead."

Leona did not reply to this observation, and a ring was formed around the captives.

At this moment the boys saw at the outer edge of the circle two white faces.

Marcia and Margot were gazing fixedly at them, their eyes full of surprise and pity, and they seemed powerless to help.

For five minutes Leona addressed the assembled warriors in his own tongue, and the boys knew that he was making a speech against them.

Suddenly the Yalu chieftain ceased and fell back. One of the listeners advanced and held up a snake skin, which seemed to be stuffed with something.

One by one, little objects that shone like balls of fire, dropped out until a little heap lay on the ground.

"They are opals!" cried Tom, astonished.

"How many?" cried Leona, whirling upon the boys.

"How can we know?" said Fred.

"If the white boy counts them right from where he stands, he and his friend will live. If he fails, they will die!"

"It is not a fair test," was the reply. "This game of life and death is all in your own hands. I have no idea how many opals are in the heap."

"It is the Yalu test. If the white people know everything, as they claim to do, the boy can count the pretty gems."

Fred smothered his indignation and looked at the heap of gems. It was impossible to count them. There might be a hundred, or there might not be over forty in the pile.

And upon him depended their lives at the hands of the savage horde!

"Why does the white boy hesitate?" cried the Yalu. "Cannot he see how many stones are yonder?"

Just then Tom's eyes which had been riveted upon the white faces of the girl captives, saw one of them make swift passes in midair.

She was not perceived by the Yalus, whose attention was concentrated upon what was occurring in the death ring. Tom's eyes followed the motions of the white hand.

All at once it flashed across his mind that the girl's hand was describing figures in the air. What were they? Seeing that she had been noticed she repeated the cabalistic motions, and a great jay swept through Tom's heart.

"Fifty-seven?" he said to himself. "It looked like fifty-seven. It is a risk anyhow. Fifty-seven the guess shall be if we die for it."

In low tones, but eagerly, he said to his companion.

"I've got an inspiration, Fred. It may fail, but we must take the risk. There are fifty-seven opals yonder."

Fred looked at him amazed, but did not speak.

"We cannot give the white boy all night to count the gems," said Leona in thunder tones. "How many are there?"

"Fifty-seven," said Fred, courageously, "we stand or fall by my count."

Leona started.

"Who told the white boy?" he demanded.

"What are one's eyes for?" said Fred. "You have said that we white people know everything——"

"You are in league with the Evil Ones! Leona is a chief of his word. There are fifty-seven opals in the little pile."

"Thank Heaven!" Fred said fervently under his breath. "It's all a mystery to me."

A yell of disappointment rose from the Yalu court when Leona announced that the white boy had correctly guessed the number of opals

"Take them back!" the chief commanded. "They are protected. What wonderful people are the white ones from the great waters!"

"Tell me," cried Fred, as he seized Tom by the shoulders when they found themselves once more within the prison hut, "tell me, how in the name of Heaven, you knew there were fifty-seven opals in the lot?"

"A friend in need is a friend indeed," was the answer. "One of the white girls gave me the tip."

"It has saved our lives, but only for the time being maybe!"

CHAPTER XI.

BLUDSOE LOSES AND WINS.

That they were still in the deadliest of toils, our young treasure hunters well knew.

The lucky guessing of the number of opals in the heap seemed but a respite, and, but for the "tip" given by Marcia Darrell, Fred and Tom would have been led to instant execution.

Leona, the Yalu chief, was puzzled over the outcome of the test. He could not imagine how Fred had guessed so well, and, being superstitious, like all savages, he was inclined to impute the interference to his idols.

But there was another person, who, coming upon the scene a little later, laughed at the old chief's ideas.

This was Ford Bludsoe, who entered Leona's hut to find the Yalu in a quandary, smiting his breast in his mad desire to solve the mystery and calling upon his native gods to come to his rescue.

"It is all dark to Leona!" exclaimed the savage as he caught sight of the white plotter. "I had the opals poured on the ground and the white boy guessed them correctly."

"It's not much of a puzzle to me," replied Ford. "He's not gifted with second sight or anything of that sort. He must have had help."

"But who could help the white prisoners?"

"You've got a traitor in your midst. Some one who knew the number of opals 'tipped it off,' as we say in our country."

Leona shook his head.

"My people are all true to me."

"But you have some people here who are not Yalus."

"I have two white girls."

"Exactly."

"It cannot be that they gave the boy the information."

"Have they ever seen the opal test applied?"

"Yes," said Leona with a sudden start. "They know how many there were in the pile."

"Then I would advise you to seek the solution among the girls."

"It shall be done," and the head man of the tribe sprang to his feet and went toward the door.

"Not quite so fast," said Bludsoe, seizing his arm. "Another time will do. I have something to say."

Sullenly Leona fell back and looked at the white man.

"I shall not be with you long," continued Bludsoe. "I have the clew to the pirate's booty."

"To the treasure buried a long time ago by the white rover of the seas?"

"Just so. One of the boys was attacked in the forest by the Yalus and overpowered. He lost the key to the treasure and killed a Yalu warrior."

"Then both of them shall die!"

"Which would be nothing but justice.

Well, the chart was carried off by the warriors, who seized the boy, and I have it here," and Bludsoe tapped his bosom significantly.

"What, has my white brother the real key to the great treasure?" and the chief came forward again.

"I've got nothing less," was the response. "Let Leona gaze upon the talking paper."

With a swift and cautious glance around Bludsoe drew forth the map and "key" which had been in Fred Farley's possession.

"Look!" he cried, thrusting it into Leona's face. "This is the key that will unlock for me La Fitte's treasure house. It will pour at my feet the jewels of the old Spanish main and send me home richer than a rajah. Don't you think I'm in luck, old friend?"

Before Bludsoe could think, the hand of Leona had darted forward and his long, dark fingers clutched the precious documents. He gave a shout of triumph as he held them aloft.

Ford Bludsoe suppressed his ire and waited for the savage to hand back the papers, but as Leona made no effort to do so, his face clouded again.

"I'll take the papers," said he. "They're safer in my hands than yours, seeing that you've got traitors in the village."

"No, white man. Leona can guard the talking papers best."

To Bludsoe's surprise the Yalu thrust the chart into a little bag at his waist with a grin of victory, leaving him to smother his wrath as best he could.

"They belong to me!" he said indignantly. "I bought them of the man who robbed the boy——"

"He should have brought them to Leona."

"They belonged to him and he had a right to barter with me."

The savage crossed the hut and suddenly turned upon the angry plotter with flashing eyes.

"What Leona gets he keeps," he growled, and the voice seemed to emanate from the depths of his malicious heart.

Bludsoe was forced to beat down his rage, for he knew that only by temporizing with the cool-headed savage could he hope to regain possession of the key to La Fitte's booty.

"But you will give them up after awhile, I suppose?" he said.

"Leona makes no promises."

"You're an old——"

He paused and left the sentence unfinished.

Just then footsteps were heard outside the hut, and the door opened.

At the threshold stood Noleeka, the young girl whom our friends found in the wreckage of the forest storm.

She glanced from her father to the white man, but did not speak.

"This is my child, Noleeka," said Leona with a wave of his hand.

"I've seen her before."

Noleeka came forward, and for a moment fixed her gaze on the white plotter.

"What does the white gold hunter want in Leona's hut?" she demanded.

"I had a little business with your father," said Bludsoe.

A faint smile appeared at the corners of Noleeka's mouth, and she said in low tones:

"Does not the white man seek the treasure of the forest?"

"What is that to you, girl?" and Bludsoe's eyes snapped with mad animation.

"Because Bara is on the trail."

"Who is Bara?" and Ford looked at the Yalu chief.

"Noleeka loves Bara," was the girl's reply.

"That is nothing to me."

"It is all to Noleeka, the chief's daughter. She carries a charm to increase Bara's love."

"Pish!" and Bludsoe fearlessly snapped his fingers, but the following moment he regretted his action. "I did not come to this accursed land to hear a love story. I came here for the pirate's loot. I am a great man in my own country. I have ships of war and they are manned by crews that can sweep from the sea all the boats of the Yalus."

"The white man is a boaster," cried Noleeka. "He may never see his own land again."

Strange to say Bludsoe's words had a startling effect on Leona.

"The Yalus do not want to make war on the white man's ships," he said. "He would live at peace with his white brother."

"Just as I would live with my friend Leona. But I must not be crossed, powerful as I am. I can stamp upon the ground at my feet and my men will hear the sound in my own land."

"It is false, father!" cried the girl. "The white man is not so powerful as that."

In another moment the hand of Leona sought the leather bag and the chart came in sight.

"Leona would remain at peace with his white friend," said the Yalu, suddenly wrought with fear. "Here is the chart to the treasure, but Tama must give Leona some when he has found it."

"Which I will gladly do," was the reply. "We must be friends, Leona. Tomorrow I will find the treasure."

"It is well," said the savage king. "Leona would now be alone with his child."

Gratified beyond expression at the sudden turn in his fortunes, Ford Bludsoe pocketed the chart and left the hut.

"It was a close shave," said he, chuckling over his success. "It did me good to show my teeth, even if I had to lie a little. The treasure is mine, and those boys are in a death trap. So there is no one between me and old La Fitte's loot. What has become of old Van Hutton, I don't know, but he's out of the road, anyhow. You're in luck and the biggest kind of luck, Captain Bludsoe, and I'll see that the chart don't leave my hands any more."

He walked rapidly to his own hut and shut the door behind him.

Meanwhile night had come down over the village of the Yalus.

It was a beautiful tropic night, with the heavens a field of stars and the air laden with a soft and fragrant breeze, wafted from the woods where flowers bloomed in wild profusion. A great calm was over all.

But the beauty of the night was nothing to the heartless plotter.

He had recovered his chart when he thought it was lost, and now he could rejoice over his luck.

If he had looked beyond the hut he would have seen a figure moving over the ground with the stealth of a panther. But it was not a beast, for it did not walk on all fours, but stoopingly, like a man bent on some secret or desperate mission.

This object continued to approach Bludsoe's hut, and when quite near it dropped to the ground and remained quiet for some minutes.

It was the almost naked figure of a native, and one of the dark hands carried a little cord.

Presently, after listening at the hut, it moved away again and approached the place of the young treasure hunters' confinement.

There it went through the same movements, but this time it crept around the guard stationed in front of the hut, all the time eyeing him like a lynx.

Suddenly the cord, which the Yalu carried, went over the guard's head like a lasso, and the man gurgled once and then was still.

Throwing his victim to one side, the young Yalu broke the cord that secured the door of the prison and slipped inside, where all was dark.

"Where white boys?" he said in a low voice.

"Here!" was the response in an eager tone. "That voice does not sound like an enemy's."

"Come!"

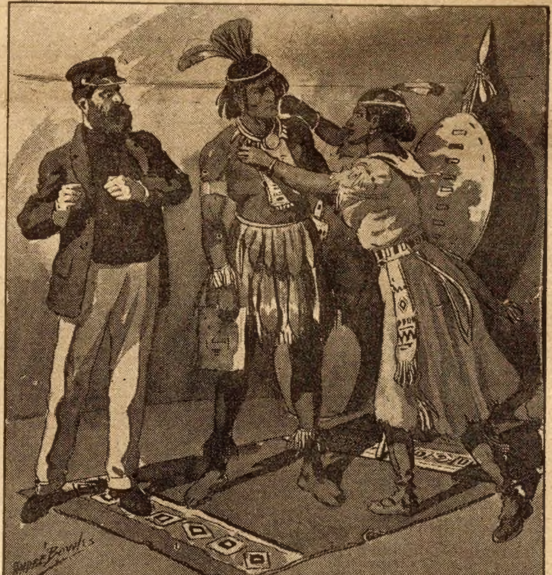
Fred and Tom aroused from a fitful slumber, leaped from their cots of grass and found the one who had come.

"Do the white boys know the way to the ship in the cove?" asked the Yalu.

"Yes, but——"

"They must seek it. If they remain they will die, for the fire test will be the next one."

"Must we give up our hunt for LaFitte's booty?" asked our young friends.



"It is false, father!" cried the girl.

"You must tear from your hearts all thoughts of it."

"Who are you?"

"I am Bara. It is worth my life to come to you."

CHAPTER XII.

FRED AND TOM TURN THE TABLES.

When Bara told the boy captives that he had come to them at the risk of his life, they remained silent in the darkness of the Yalu hut.

They could not conceive why he, whom they had accused of the death of Van Hutton, should offer them liberty at such a sacrifice, but he was there and had spoken.

"We are willing to go with you," said Fred, "but we do not like the thought of abandoning our quest, especially without knowing what has become of our friend."

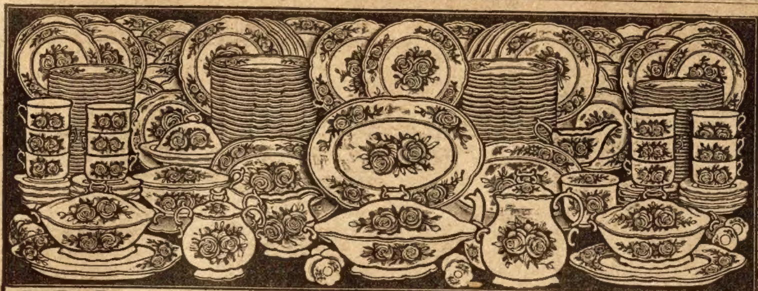
To this Bara made no reply for a moment, but when he spoke again he said:

"Then the white boys will remain and submit to the test of fire?"

"Is it so terrible?"

"They will never live to tell what it is like."

"Lead the way, then," Fred answered. "We will hope for the best. But will you not tell us what has become of Captain Van? You disappeared with him and we found his hand in the forest."



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"It is not for Bara to say," was the startling reply.

"Is he dead?"

"The forest must be Bara's lips. It may speak for him."

Half a minute later Fred and Tom were on the outside of the hut, and Bara guided them over the prostrate figure on the ground.

"It is not to be the ship without the booty and the solving of the mystery that involves Captain Van's fate," Fred whispered to his companion. "I cannot think of going back at this stage of the game. We are near the treasure. It cannot be far off, and when we lost Captain Van I had discovered in the forest certain signs that we were at the edge of success.

"Then you propose to escape from Bara and still continue the quest?"

"Yes, Tom. Nothing risked nothing gained, and, then, there are the two girls who are prisoners of these wild people. They are like us, of white lineage, and the moment they saw us they must have taken hope."

Bara guided them from the Yalu village, nor halted until they were far from its dangerous confines.

"The Yalu is heading for the coast," Tom said in a whisper. "He will take us to the ship, nor leave us till we are aboard."

"It must not be. If the booty is lost now, it is lost forever."

"The booty, then!" exclaimed Tom in determined tones. "Watch the Yalu."

Bara kept on, and at last halted on ground familiar to the boys, as it was the scene of their first camp.

"Now is our time!" said Fred. "We are a match for our liberator. No harm must be done him, for he has freed us from the toils of the savages."

The following moment Fred, with the agility of a young lion, bounded forward and landed on Bara's shoulders.

Tom at once seconded his attack and between them the Yalu was borne to the ground.

Bara maintained a sullenness that boded the young adventurers no good, and to their surprise he did not even struggle.

"We are not going to the ship," said Fred, as he looked down into the eyes of the prostrate savage.

"Where will white boys go?"

"Back to the old trail—back to the trail of the pirate's booty."

"The heads of the white boys are empty," grinned Bara.

"Maybe so, but we have risked so much already that what is coming cannot be a greater trial."

To this there was no reply, and at a signal from Tom, Fred sprang up and both darted off leaving the Yalu half-bewildered on the ground.

Half a mile or more from the scene of their liberation they halted and took new breath.

A lucifer match showed them the face of Fred's compass, and they looked wonderingly at one another.

In a strange land, surrounded by dangers unseen, without weapons, they were in a dilemma that would have appalled the stoutest hearts. But true American blood was in their veins and they resolved not to turn back until two things had been accomplished—the finding of Van Hutton and the recovery of the booty.

It was not long until day, and, hidden among the leafy branches of a tree, they waited for the first signs of dawn.

At last the long arrows of daylight began to penetrate the wood, and the boys looked around. They were in the heart of a forest, entirely strange to them. Across the ground below, something crawled deliberately, and they beheld an enormous serpent, which now and then lifted its head and showed them the malicious eyes that sparkled there.

When the deadly reptile had vanished they dropped from their perch and tried to get their bearings.

"If we were only armed," said Tom, "we might fare better."

"Better weaponless than the toils of death in Leona's village."

"Right you are, Fred, but we are still in the toils of this demon land, and so far I cannot see our way out of it."

As the forest brightened with the rays of the rising sun, showing off its gorgeous beauties, the boys espied a patch of bushes crimson with large luscious berries.

"A breakfast fit for a king!" cried Fred, while they gorged themselves on the fruit.

"Served to one's wish," was Tom's reply, as he devoured a handful. "About the next thing that comes to our net will be weapons."

"No luck so good as that," smiled Fred. "We are out of the clutches of Leona and that is something. The savage will take the trail when he discovers our escape——"

"Silence, and down!" was the sudden interruption, and the boy adventurers dropped to the earth and drew over them the heavy vines of the berry patch.

Five minutes later the vines about them trembled and they caught a glimpse of a figure that riveted their attention.

"It's not America, but it's something," said a rough voice. "Why did I ever come back to this country at the bidding of two boys? Captain Van, you're the biggest fool o' the century——"

The sentence was never finished, for Fred and Tom sprang up and presented themselves to the astonished speaker.

"In the name o' snakes an' turtles, where did you come from?" cried Van Hutton, as he recoiled with his mouth full of wild fruit. "I've just got out o' the fryin' pan——"

"And we, out of the fire," finished Fred. "Let us see your left hand, Captain Van."

"That's one o' the impossibilities," was the reply.

"You've lost it!" and the boys fell back from the bandaged wrist which the old sailor displayed.

"You'll have to pension me when you find La Fitte's loot, for if it hadn't been for you I would be smoking my dudeen on the old Battery."

"Tell us how you lost it."

"When I've finished my breakfast," coolly answered Captain Van. "One thing at a time, my lads."

Forced to wait on the old man while they marveled at his coolness, Fred and Tom searched the forest with watchful eyes, and at last, as Van Hutton turned to them, they gave him their attention.

"That young Yalu did it," said the old man. "You see he believes that if he can cut off the hand of a white man he will never fail in his undertakings. They all believe this fol-de-rol, do these devilish Yalus, and that's why more than one white sailor who has been shipwrecked on this island, buys only one glove."

"It's terrible!" ejaculated the boys in unison.

"Yes, but it's better than one's throat, eh?" laughed Van Hutton.

"Yes, it's better than that."

"Well, when Bara took me into the forest without disturbing you two, the first thing I knew I was on the ground and that young savage was bending over me with his knife. He'd make a good surgeon, for he went at his task in fine shape. I fainted like a woman while he was hacking at my wrist, and when I came to consciousness my stump was bound up and I was alone. I went in the wrong direction, and I can't tell you how long I tramped it in a circle, like bewildered people do, till at last I struck the old camp only to find you gone. But I've got one good arm yet, and if I ever meet Bara there'll be one of his schemes that'll go astray."

"I don't doubt it, Captain Van," said Fred. "We owe a good deal to this same young savage."

"What! did you meet him after he robbed me of my hand?"

Thereupon Farley told the story of their adventures since losing Captain Van, and the old man listened without a single comment.

"It's a long road that turns not," he said at last. "Some one must have persuaded Bara to liberate you. I think I could guess. It must have been Noleeka."

"Leona's daughter?"

"Yes, the young girl we found after the storm. She's dead in love with this same coppery rascal, an' I might add vice versa. But see here, I don't know what you boys think about the situation. As for me, I'm not going back till I've balanced a little account, nor until I beat Ford Bludsoe out o' the treasure."

"That is to our liking!" exclaimed Tom Gaylor. "Now what's the first move?"

"You've got the second chart, I mean the one you made after you lost the original?" inquired Van Hutton.

"Yes."

"That's good. We're going right after the million now."

"At once, Captain Van?"

"Sooner than that if possible. A bit o' ground struck me peculiarly awhile back."

"The treasure land, think you?"

"Exactly! I put this and that together, I compared what I know o' the chart with the lay of a certain bit o' land, an' I'm almost willin' to bet my other hand, and go without gloves all my life, that we're mighty close to old La Fitte's cache."

"Where is it?" cried the boys.

"It's beyond the last camp. All our tools are there, for they haven't been disturbed and, since you've lost your weapons, I fancy that extra ones are still where we hid them at the old camp."

"Then to the camp!" was the eager cry, and Van Hutton turned and stalked away.

"Here we are," said he, an hour later, when he halted in a spot recognized by Fred and Tom. "You see I've been on this devil island before and it's pretty hard for me to lose my bearings. Look yonder for the extras," and Fred did so, to drag forth from a tangle of brush two repeating guns and other weapons.

"This is luck!" he cried, as he held the weapons up to Tom, whose eyes snapped with delight.

"Let the future answer that," quietly said Van Hutton. "Now for the million!"

A strange spirit seemed to have taken possession of the old sailor. Unmindful of his injury, he bolted through the woods like a deer, the boys believing him half-demented, keeping at his heels. Mile after mile they almost ran. At last Van Hutton paused amid a wild region, and falling breathless against a tree, pointed to a certain spot.

"Look at your chart, Freddy boy!" he exclaimed. "This is the big mahogany and right over there are the millions of Monsieur La Fitte!"

The continuation of this thrilling narrative of treasure hunting will be found in the Ledger issue of next week. If you are not a regular subscriber to the Ledger we would like to have your name on our list. The Ledger is only $1.00 per year; it is worth many times that amount. Send in your subscription, for many great stories that you cannot afford to miss will appear during the coming months.

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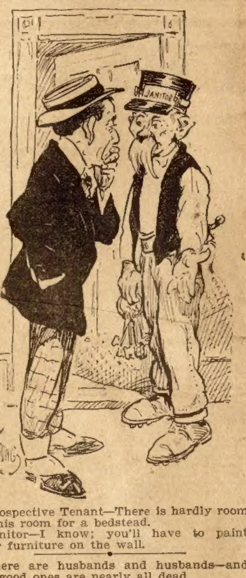
The Usual Flat.



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The Stolen Fort.

(Continued from page five.)

if he would undertake to bring Roellack, the chief trader there, to a designated place at a designated time. Roellack was to be told that it was on a matter of importance, but that nothing could be explained prematurely. Once there, Bruce would meet him.

Miller, the trapper, had numerous questions to ask before he would agree to act, but, when satisfied that all was above board, he agreed to do Bruce's will.

Fresh hope dawned in Bruce's mind. Roellack was well away from his own post, and a brave man. If Bruce could get speech with him, the tangle in his affairs might possibly be unravelled.

When all was said the trader took leave of Miller and went his way. He departed with strong good wishes from the old man, and mutual hope of another meeting before many days.

Once, as he walked away, Bruce looked back. The trapper was again bent low over the fire. In his weakness he seemed a feeble staff upon which to lean, but, somehow, the Hudson Bay men must know the truth about Bruce of Athabasca.

Miller, old as he was, might be the saving genius of the game.

The trader went a little way in the direction he had before been pursuing, and then, avoiding the fire, started briskly back to Fort Ever-Beware, where he arrived in due time.

Simple Simeon met him at the gate.

"Monsieur Bellefauile," he said placidly, "I bring you tidings of great joy!"

"What joy?" asked Bruce, thinking of Grio Turcotte.

"Your honored father has arrived at this fort!"

"My father!" echoed Bruce blankly.

"Voila, it is so. Monsieur Onesime Bellefauile is here, and longing to see his son. He sent a messenger on ahead of him some long while ago, but thinks you never got word. He is right from Montreal, or Quebec, or somewhere. He is now in the fort. Said I not that I brought you great joy—hein?"

Bruce was speechless. Simple as Simeon was, he was fully capable of telling a story accurately, and the trader recalled that, when Grio instructed him as to the past history of Louis Bellefauile, he had said that the French trader had a father in the East.

The false Louis Bellefauile was dumfounded. His castle of deceit was tottering to its fall. Others he had deceived, but he could not deceive the father of the true Louis.

Onesime Bellefauile and ruin were now synonymous.

Discovery could not be averted when he faced the Frenchman.

Simeon talked on without being heard by the trader, but the arrival of Paul Quivillion aroused Bruce from his abstraction.

"Ah, Louis," said Paul, "I doubt not you have heard the good news from Simeon. Never mind; if he has had the telling, I will have the guiding. Your father is eager to see you. Come with me. He feels that he cannot wait. Come on!"

This powerful story of treachery and adventure will be continued in next week's Ledger. Do not miss reading it. A lot of great and timely stories will appear in the Ledger during this year. Send in your subscription and you will find yourself repaid many times over. You will be lonesome without the Ledger, so do not let your subscription expire.

An Unconquered Peak.

The mountains and peaks of the San Juan in southwestern Colorado present a different appearance from any of the northern Rockies.

They are grander, more precipitious, with sharper pinnacles and more jagged in outline. In height, Mounts Massive, Elbert and Blanca slightly outrank those of the San Juan, but nowhere else can be found whole groups of mountains rearing their heads to and above 14,000 feet.

Mount Wilson—14,250 feet—the dominant peak, is one of the most massive in the entire Rocky Mountain range. Just east of this mountain is the remarkable trachyte obelisk called the "Lizard Head." The vivid imagination of an early pioneer who had been "seeing things," is said to be responsible for the name.

The summit is 14,160 feet above the sea. From a ponderous base the pinnacle rises 290 feet with a diameter at the foot of only about 60 feet, gradually tapering to less than half that at the top.

Lizard Head has defied all attempts of mountain climbers to reach its summit. The foot of the pinnacle is easily accomplished, but thus far the steep sides of the 290-foot shaft have proved unsurmountable. No doubt the time will come when the venturesome mountain climber will find a way, but many a failure is the record of the past.

Trains circle this mountain for miles on the way from Telluride to Rico.

Poor Economy.

U. S. Marshal Henkel had completed in New York the sale of thousands of dollars' worth of Paris gowns smuggled unsuccessfully in by women.

"It is poor economy, this smuggling, this saving of the legal duty," Marshal Henkel said. "Poor economy, foolish economy. It reminds me of a Philadelphia woman.

"Worn out by our winter's gayeties, this Philadelphia woman went to Atlantic City to pass Lent restfully. She departed in a very weak, run-down condition, and her husband was dreadfully shocked—yet not incredulous, either—when he received one day this wire:

"'Come down to Atlantic City at once. I am dying—Helen.'

"The wretched man slammed down the lid of his desk, grabbed his hat, and reached Atlantic City by the first express.

"In a ravishing toilet his wife was at the station to meet him with the hotel motor 'bus.

"'But—but'—he stammered, 'what did you mean by that telegram about dying?'

"'Oh, she exclaimed, laughing, 'I wanted to say that I was dying to see you, but my ten words ran out, and I had to stop.

"What was the worst crush you ever got into?"

"The scramble for the morning mail at the summer hotel."

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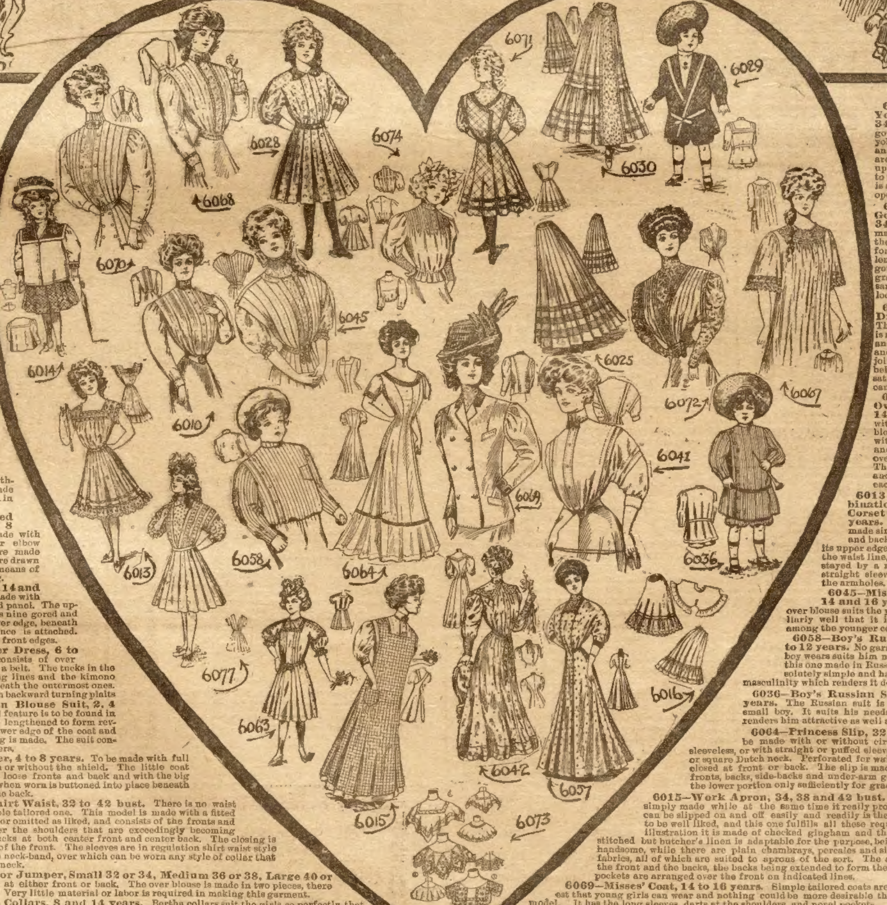

6025—Straight Plaited Walking Skirt, 22 to 30 waist. Bordered materials are in ever increasing demand for skirts that are suited to their use and this one is straight at its lower edge and consequently perfectly well adapted to the purpose The skirt is made in one piece and is laid in backward turning plaits.

6010—Blouse or Shirt Waist, 32 to 42 bust. Made with the front and the back, a regulation box plait at the center front and a neck-band finishes the neck. Collar is of the turn-over sort and can be made from any striped material or to match waist. Regulation sleeves with cuffs straight.

6068—A Misse's Shirt Waist, 14 to 16 years. This simple shirt waist that is made with long sleeves is designed for young girls. The waist is made with fronts and back.

6063—Girl's one-piece Dress, 6 to 12 years. Pretty little dresses, buttoned together under the arms, or made in envelope style are much in vogue now.

6074—Girl's Tucked and Plain Guimpes, 8 to 14 years. To be made with fancy or plain long or elbow sleeves. The guimpes are made with front and backs and are drawn up at the waist line by means of tapes inserted in a casing.

6030—Misses' Skirt, 14 and 16 years. The skirt is made with upper portion, flounce and panel. The upper portion of the skirt is nine gored and is laid in a tuck at the lower edge, beneath which the gathered flounce is attached. The panel is joined to the front edges.

6077—Girl's Jumper Dress, 6 to 12 years. The dress consists of over blouse and skirt joined by a belt. The tucks in the over blouse give becoming lines and the kimono sleeves are attached beneath the outermost ones. The straight skirt is laid in backward turning plaits

6029—Boy's Russian Blouse Suit, 2, 4 and 6 years. A special feature is to be found in the sailor collar, which is lengthened to form revers which extend to the lower edge of the coat and beneath which the closing is made. The suit consists of the coat and trousers.

6014—Child's Reefer, 4 to 8 years. To be made with full or plain sleeves, worn with or without the shield. The little coat is made simply with the loose fronts and back and with the big sailor collar. The shield when worn is buttoned into place beneath the collar and closed at the back.

6070—Blouse or Shirt Waist, 32 to 42 bust. There is no waist quite so useful as the simple tailored one. This model is made with a fitted lining, which can be used or omitted as liked, and consists of the fronts and back. There are tucks over the shoulders that are exceedingly becoming and there are narrow tucks at both center front and center back. The closing is made invisibly at the left of the front. The sleeves are in regulation shirt waist style with straight cuffs and the neck-band, over which can be worn any style of collar that may be liked, finishes the neck.

6072—Over Blouse or Jumper, Small 32 or 34, Medium 36 or 38, Large 40 or 42 bust. To be closed at either front or back. The over blouse is made in two pieces, there being no seams whatever. Very little material or labor is required in making this garment.

6073—Girl's Bertha Collars, 8 and 14 years. Bertha collars suit the girls so perfectly that they are always worn and here are some charming models that are novel yet simple and can be utilized over any dress. Each bertha is made in one piece. No. 1 i. quite plain, but Nos. 2 and 3 are perforated for the medallions and for the banding, which make such effective trimming.

6016—One-Piece Circular Drawers, 22 to 32 waist. The fad of the one-piece garment has extended to the realm of underwear, and the drawers that are made in one piece are the latest shown. They are cut in one piece and are circular in shape. The upper edge is finished with an under facing that is stitched to form a casing at the back portion, and in this casing tape or ribbon is inserted to regulate the size.

6067—A Round Yoke Nightgown, 34 to 44 bust. The gown is made with the yoke, the full front and back. These last are gathered at their upper edges and joined to the yoke and there is a comfortable deep opening at the front.

6042—A House Gown or Wrapper, 34 to 44 bust. To be made with or without the fancy collar, perforated for shorter length. This house gown gives long and graceful lines at the same time that it is loose and comfortable.

6028—A Girl's Dress, 8 to 14 yrs. The simple dress that is made with the loose and comfortable blouse and skirt which are joined by means of a belt is one of the most satisfactory that a girl can possess.

6071—A Girl's Over-Dress, 8 to 14 years. To be worn with any guimpe. The blouse is made simply with fronts and back and is laid in tucks over the shoulders. The skirt is five gored and laid in a plait at each seam.

6013—Misses' Combination Petticoat and Corset Cover, 14 and 16 years. The petticoat is made simply with the front and backs. It is tucked at its upper edge and is gathered at the waist line, the gathers being stayed by a narrow belt. The straight sleeves are inserted in the armholes.

6045—Misses' Over Blouse 14 and 16 years. This pretty over blouse suits the young girls so peculiarly well that it is a special favorite among the younger contingent.

6058—Boy's Russian Blouse, 6 to 12 years. No garment that the small boy wears suits him more perfectly than this one made in Russian style. It is absolutely simple and has just that touch of masculinity which renders it dear to his heart.

6036—Boy's Russian Suit, 2, 4 and 6 years. The Russian suit is a favorite for the small boy. It suits his needs perfectly and it renders him attractive as well as comfortable.

6064—Princess Slip, 32 to 42 bust. To be made with or without circular flounce and sleeveless, or with straight or puffed sleeves, with low, round or square Dutch neck. Perforated for walking length; to be closed at front or back. The slip is made with fronts, side fronts, backs, side-backs and under-arm gores and it flares at the lower portion only sufficiently for grace and comfort.

6015—Work Apron, 34, 38 and 42 bust. The apron that is simply made while at the same time it really protects the gown and can be slipped on and off easily and readily is the one quite certain to be well liked, and this one fulfills all these requirements. In the illustration it is made of checked gingham and the edges are simply stitched but butcher's linen is adaptable for the purpose, being both sturdy and handsome, while there are plain chambrays, percales and simple printed wash fabrics, all of which are suited to aprons of the sort. The apron is made with the front and the backs, the backs being extended to form the straps. The patch pockets are arranged over the front on indicated lines.

6069—Misses' Coat, 14 to 16 years. Simple tailored coats are among the smartest that young girls can wear and nothing could be more desirable than this particular model. It has the long sleeves, darts at the shoulders, and novel pockets.

6041—One-Piece Shirt Waist, 32 to 40 bust. The blouse is made in one piece and the box plait is applied over the front edge. The sleeve portions are gathered into straight cuffs and the neck is finished with a neck-band over which can be worn any stock or collar preferred.

6057—Princess Gown, 34 to 42 bust. To be made in walking or round length, with or without the fitted lining. The skirt and the blouse portions are joined at the sides by means of a belt, but the panels at the front and the back give the long unbroken characteristic lines. Every variation of the princess model is meeting with enthusiasm, and many women will welcome this modified one.

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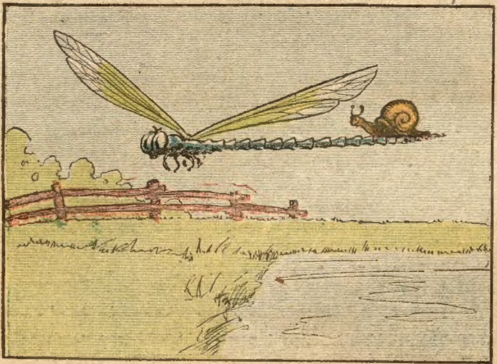
FOR YOUTHFUL EYES



Madam Snail—How's this for an airship, boys and girls?

Japanese Games.

Many of the games of the Japanese children are of a national character, and are played by all classes. Among such are those that belong to the old festival days, and, beginning with the first of the year, there are a number of games and sports peculiar to this time.

The girls, dressed in their best robes and girdles, with their faces powdered, lips painted and their hair arranged in the prettiest possible manner, are out upon the street playing battledore and shuttlecock. They play in circles, as well as in twos and threes. The shuttlecock is a small seed, often gilded, stuck around with feathers arranged like the petals of a flower. The battledore is a wooden bat, one side of which is of bare wood, while the other has the raised effigy of some popular actor, hero of romance, or singing girl. Those who fail in the game often have their faces marked with ink, or a circle drawn round their eyes. The boys sing a song that the wind will blow; the girls sing that it may be calm, so that their shuttlecocks may fly straight. The littlest girls at this time play with a ball made of cotton cord, covered with many strands of bright-colored silk.

On winter evenings Japanese children amuse themselves at home with their games, or are amused by their elders, who tell them entertaining stories. The father relates to his son stories of heroic deeds in order to fire him with enthusiasm and a love of those achievements which every Japanese youth hopes some day to perform. Then there are many social entertainments at which children of a certain age are allowed to be present. The numerous and varied games of cards are, however, the most popular form of amusement. Checkers is played on a raised stand or table about six inches in height. The number of "go," or checkers, including black and white, is 360. In the sho-gi, or game of chess, the pieces number forty in all. Backgammon is also a favorite, and there are several forms of it. When the winds are favorable to the sport, kites are flown, and there are few things in which the Japanese boy takes more delight.

Royal Babes of Long Ago.

Royal babies in the days of long ago generally had two cradles, one for every day, and another, a very grand one, for state occasions, when visitors came to see them and kiss their tiny hands, in courtier fashion.

Little Prince Edward, afterward Edward VI., was taken so much care of that no one was allowed to go near his cradle without an order signed by the King. He had two nurses, "Mother Jak" and "Sibilla Penne," and four "rockers;" that is, people to rock the cradle. You must know that rules were rules in those days, and a royal baby had to be rocked at certain hours, three or four times a day, whether the poor mite happened to be asleep or not.

James I. actually had five rockers, one of whom was called Jane Crummy. When he began to toddle, he was assisted by leading strings of rose-colored silk.

It was not all joy to be born in a palace in those strict days. Nobody might take the little princeling up but the proper person.

Fancy, too, having baby's food tasted for fear some one would try to poison him! Do you think that things are better managed in the nice, comfortable days we have the good fortune to live? One feels sure that in the royal palaces of England today the little children have an ever so much better time of it, and are governed by the same good commonsense rules that are made by your father and mother for you.

Another.

"I hate to bother you, pop; but really I'd like to know——"

"Well, what?"

"How it happens that baby fish don't get drowned before they've learned to swim?"—Washington Star.

MY CALLER.

I was out in my garden, with basket and shears,
Adding rose after rose to my store
When a rat-a-tat-tat faintly came to my ears,
I ran round to reach the front door.
I arrived there too late; just a card on the mat,
Reading: Mary Amelia Evangeline Pratt.

I pictured her, dignified, prim and precise,
With "prisms and prunes" sort of air.
Then I looked down the long gravel walk in a trice,
If perchance she might still linger there.
And sure enough, right down the path, pit-a-pat,
Trotted Mary Amelia Evangeline Pratt!

Helen's Gift.

Little Helen was very much frightened once by a Jack-in-the-box, but was a dignified little maid and kept her sensations to herself. Not long after her grandfather came to visit her and called upstairs:

"Helen, come here, I have something for you!" Helen leaned over the banister and called back:

"Grandfather, if it is anything in a box, thank you just the same, but I won't come down."

The Russian Crown.

It is said that the Russian crown is the costliest in the world. It is surmounted by a cross formed of five magnificent diamonds and resting on an immense uncut ruby. The ruby, which is polished, though uncut, rests on eleven large diamonds, which, in turn, rest on a mat of pearls. The coronet worn by the Empress on ceremonial occasions contains, it is said, the most beautiful collection of diamonds ever massed together.

An Advantage.

"You ought to be contented with your lot these hard times," remarked the elephant to the twelve-foot snake.

"And why?" asked the latter, as he rolled a cigarette with his person.

"Why, it's so easy for you to make both ends meet," replied the elephant, and then the whole menagerie broke into an uproar.

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